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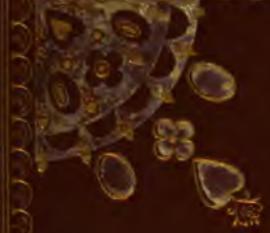
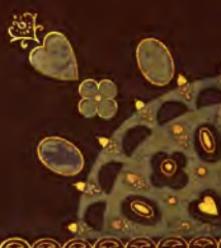
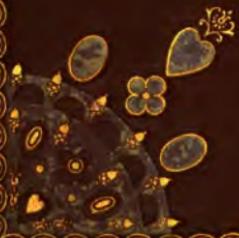
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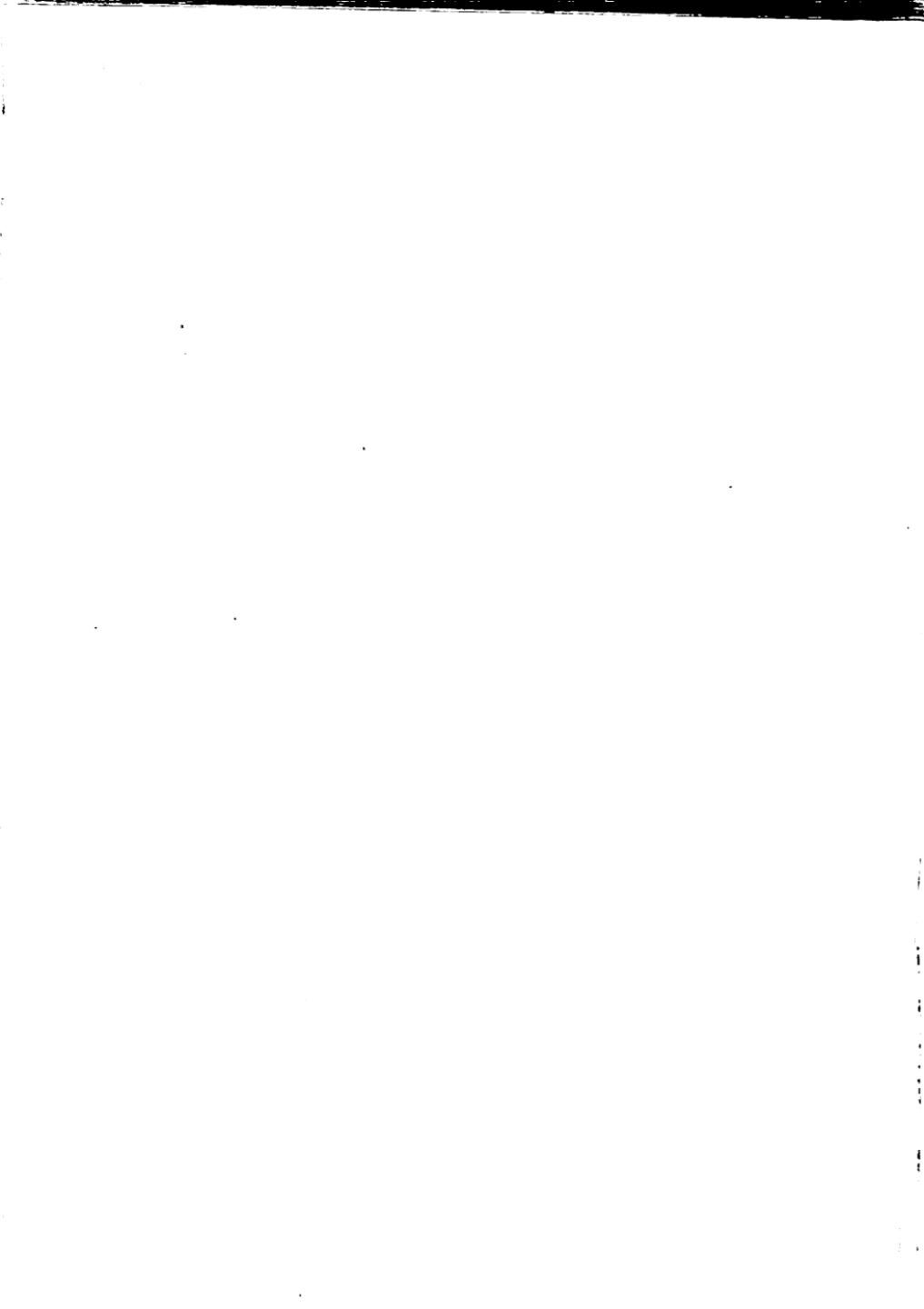
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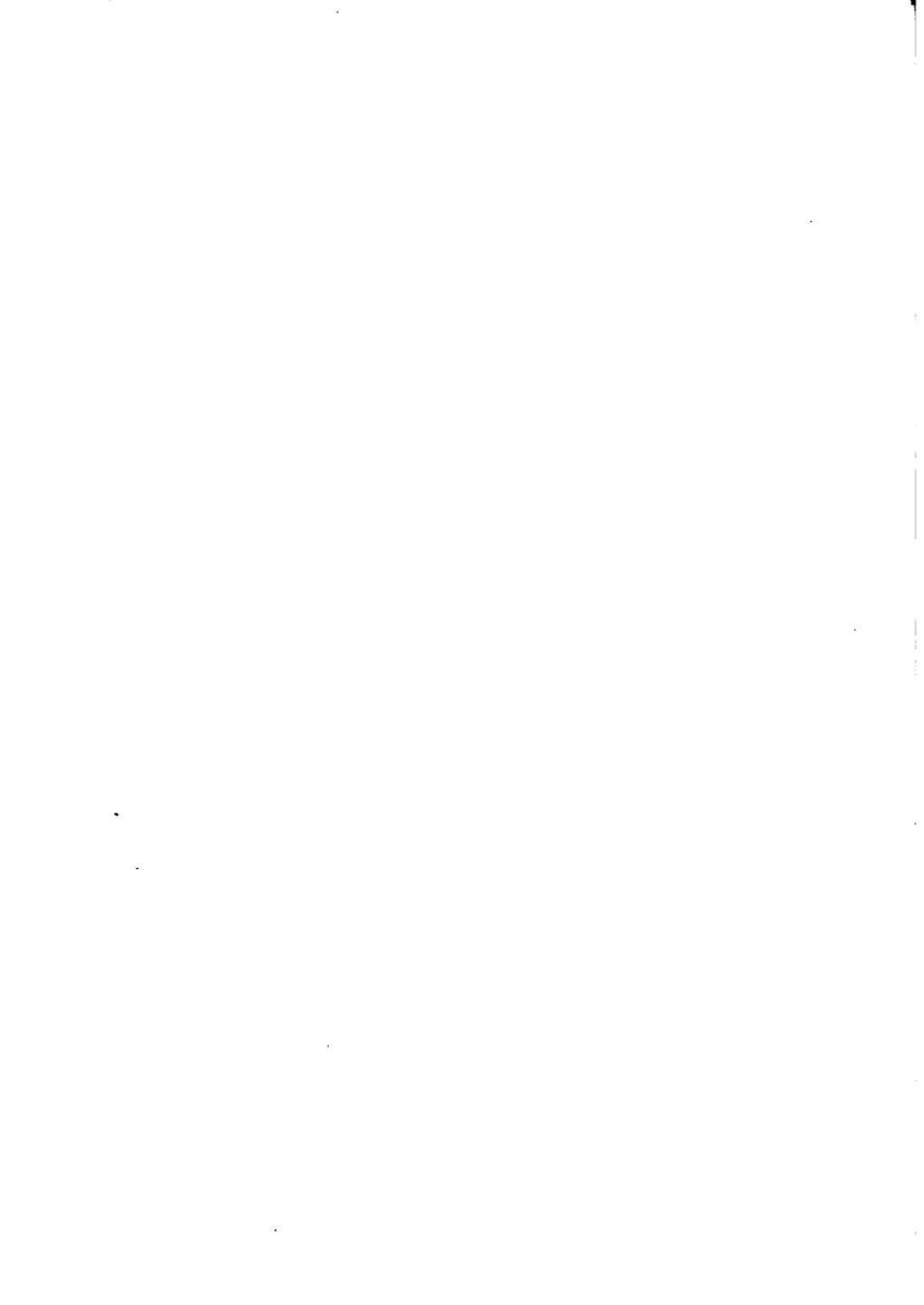


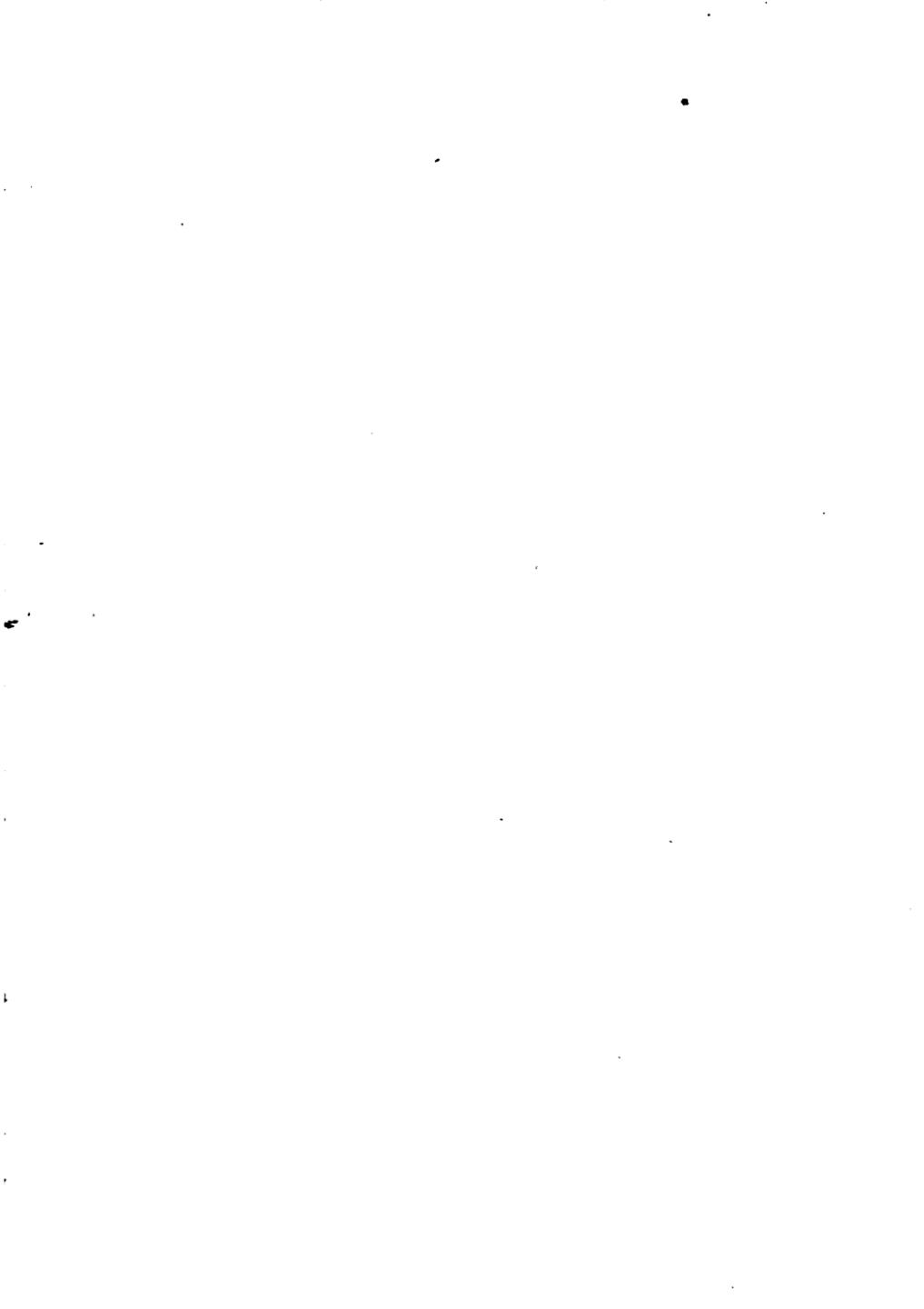


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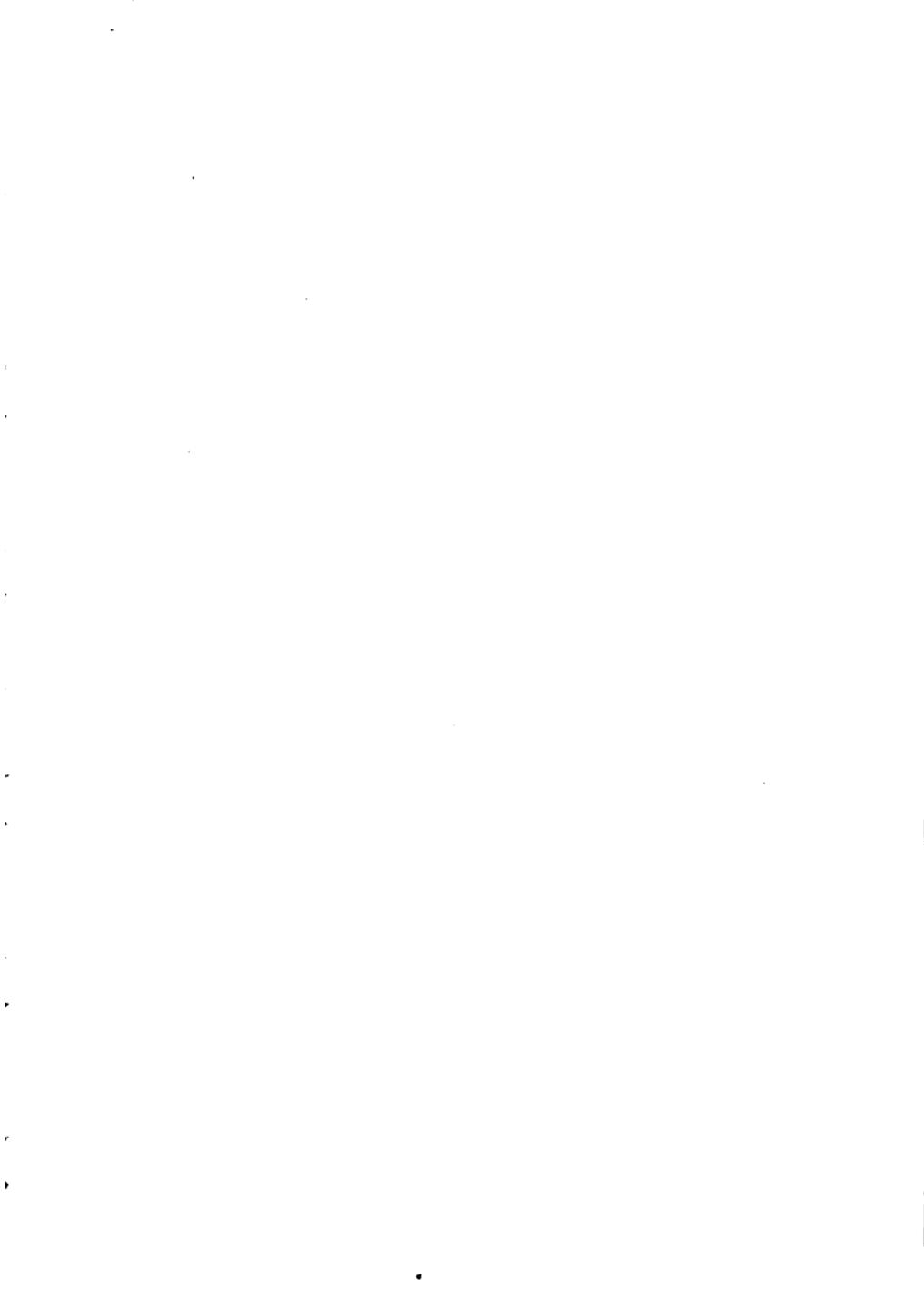






**THE LIFE AND TIMES OF  
NICHOLAS FERRAR**





*Frontispiece*



*Nicholas Ferrer*

*Circa 1617*

*By special permission, from the portrait by Cornelius Janssen at  
Magdalene College, Cambridge*

# THE LIFE AND TIMES OF NICHOLAS FERRAR

BY

H. P. K. SKIPTON

'Nor sang he only of unfading bowers,  
Where they a tearless, painless age fulfil,  
In fields Elysian spending blissful hours  
Remote from every ill ;

'But of pure gladness found in temperance high,  
In duty owned and reverenced with awe,  
Of man's true freedom, which may only lie  
In servitude to law.'

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CARISSIMVM AD AMICVM

‘SAEPE MECVM TEMPVS IN VLTIMVM’

CLEMENT JOHN WILKINSON



## P R E F A C E

LITTLE excuse is needed for a fresh book upon Nicholas Ferrar. Since 1855, when Professor J. E. B. Mayor published his *Two Lives*, only two books of any note have appeared dealing with the subject, those by Miss Carter and by Miss Cruwys Sharland. The former is for the most part a connected narrative based upon Professor Mayor's work, though there are some additions of value as an outcome of the writer's own research; but dates are sometimes incorrectly given (some of these, no doubt, are printer's errors), and the story of the connection of the Ferrars with the Virginia Company is very imperfectly set forth. Miss Cruwys Sharland gives a transcript of the famous Story Books, which is of great interest. But some valuable material still remains unused. In 1900 the Rev. Mackreth Noble read a careful paper on the connection between the Knights Templars and Little Gidding before the British Archaeological Association. Mr. Cyril Davenport published a useful monograph upon the *Little Gidding Bindings* in 1896; and Captain J. E. Acland brought out a sketch of *Little Gidding and its Inmates* through the S.P.C.K. in 1903, which gave in concise form the available information about the Har-

monies. Mr. M. L. Ferrar's brief monograph upon *The Limerick-Huntingdon Ferrars* contains some valuable information; and a convenient summary is that by the late Bishop Creighton in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Three magazine articles by Archdeacon Bindley, the Rev. W. J. Ferrar, and an anonymous writer in the *Church-woman*, swell the list. Add to these the partial reprint of the famous transcript of the Court Book of the Virginia Company which appeared in the *Massachusetts Historical Collections*; the splendid reprint of the whole transcript which has just been published by the United States Government under the very efficient editorship of Miss S. M. Kingsbury; the pamphlets in Force's collection, which furnish the interesting details of Virginia Ferrar's experiments in the culture of silk-worms; Woodnoth's and other pamphlets bearing on the Virginia business, and throwing light indirectly upon the intimacy between Ferrar and George Herbert; and the facts, hitherto, as it would seem, unnoticed, that the manuscript of *The Temple* in the Bodleian, endorsed by the Censor, is in the handwriting of Nicholas Ferrar, and that the *Song of the Obedient* is a translation from the Latin, and it will be seen that something still remained to be done before the story of Nicholas Ferrar and his work could be said to be brought in any sense up to date. Most of this new information I have tried to embody in my text.

For the biographical details I have relied mainly upon Peckard's version of the lost biography of Nicholas by John Ferrar. I should like to have

made more use of Professor Mayor's work, but his reply to my letters requesting permission to quote at length from his valuable edition of the *Two Lives* reached me too late to allow of my doing so. Something, no doubt, has thus been lost, for Jebb's version of Turner's *Life* is in some respects fuller, and probably nearer to the original than that edited by Macdonogh. Professor Mayor is not, however, impeccable, and some of the dates which he gives or infers are certainly open to question. Other authorities are the Lambeth Palace MSS. by John Ferrar, and the works of Hacket, Rushworth, Barnabas Oley, Izaak Walton, and George Herbert. There is confirmation, too, which I may not quote, for my conjecture that the building depicted upon the title-page of the *Arminian Nunnery* pamphlet is the church at Little Gidding as it was before the desecration by the Puritans. I strongly suspect, too, that the existing farmhouse at Little Gidding is a fragment of the original home of the Community; parts of it are certainly about that age, and its position, if we imagine the entire building to have formed three sides of a quadrangle of which the present farmhouse represents the middle portion, the two wings having vanished, is not inconsistent with this view. But I am unable to verify this, or to obtain any evidence bearing upon it. My principal object, however, has been to try to present a picture of Nicholas Ferrar and his work, and to this end I have set aside much matter of purely archaeological interest which would have appealed only to a few enthusiasts. Ferrar's work and personality seemed

to me to have a distinct and vivid interest for Churchmen of to-day, and in this must lie my justification for the task which I have attempted.

My thanks are due to Miss Ireland Blackburne for valuable assistance in connection with this book, and to the Editor of the *Guardian* for permission to reprint some of the chapters which had already appeared as articles in the columns of that journal.

HORACE SKIPTON.

GRANVILLE, REIGATE,  
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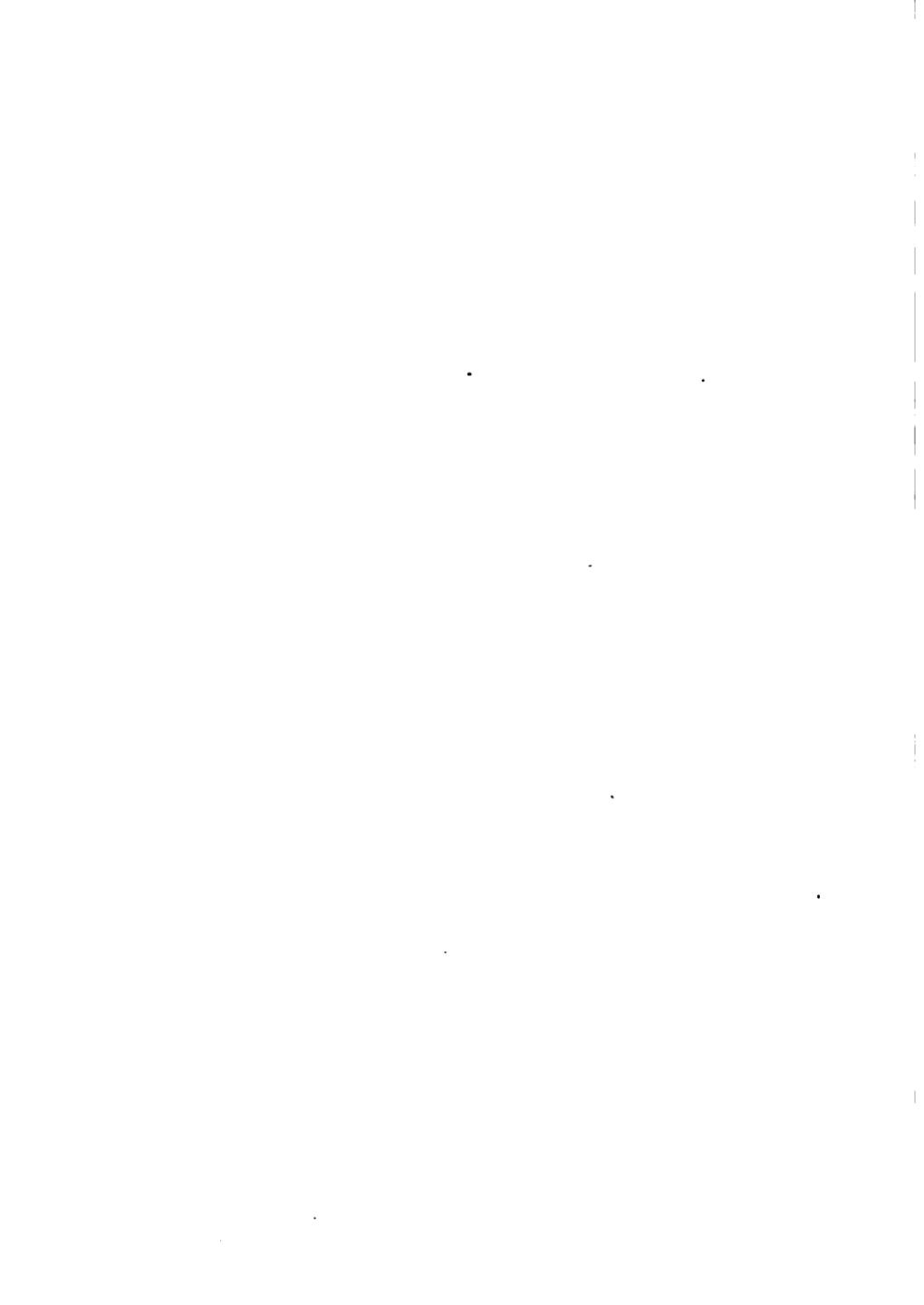
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## INTRODUCTORY

‘Oh yet we trust that somehow good  
Will be the final goal of ill.’

It has been said more than once, and by men of very different schools of thought, that the more that protracted and complex movement which has been termed the Reformation is examined, the less desirable it appears; and in a great measure this is true. The ideal with which the Anglican Church set out—that of shaking off the secular domination of the Pope of Rome, while retaining unimpaired the credentials of the Church, the continuity of her Orders, the Catholic Creeds, and the central body of essential Christian doctrine—was indeed attained, though through seasons of great risk and peril, and through exceedingly miry ways. Yet when one looks round at some of the conditions which still obtain (though in an ever-decreasing measure) within the Church—an uninstructed laity, churches closed from Sunday to Sunday, great festivals passed over with no celebration of the Eucharist, services

carelessly performed, and ignorant and perfunctory preaching—there is no evading the fact that some of the mire has stuck. But the fact, too, that through all its early confusions, that in spite of grasping monarchs and politicians, unscrupulous and faithless clergy, and the lawlessness of infidel mobs, not to mention the long continuance of Puritan oppression, the Church in England has emerged with the tokens of her catholicity intact, does suggest the presence of a more than human guidance and protection, in which Churchmen may safely confide through the darkness which still besets her path. Some there have always been in her darkest and most troublous days who have held fast to this faith, waiting hopefully for the dawn which they did not live to see, and conspicuous among that noble company was Nicholas Ferrar, whose labours and personality, with all that flowed therefrom, are the subject of this sketch.

This is not the place to rewrite the history of the Reformation, but to understand at all the place of Nicholas Ferrar in the Anglican Church as it was in his day, it is necessary to form some idea of its attitude and of the strength and direction of the currents that influenced its course. To do this we must first rid ourselves definitely of the party shibboleths and distinctions round which we group ourselves to-day. Such terms as 'High Church'

and 'Low Church,' as we understand them, mean little as applied to the men of that day; we must even be careful in our use of so essential a term as 'Catholic.' Lady Wimborne and Mr. Kensit might rejoice in the man who regarded the Pope as Antichrist and the Mass with abhorrence, and who stood the altar in his church 'upon the half-pace, not altarwise'; while Lord Halifax and those who think with him might with equal justice claim as an ally the restorer of the religious life in the Church of England, the ceremonious observer of canonical hours, the translator of the Catholic mystic Valdesso, the devoted and scholarly student of the Bible and the Fathers of the Church. But though one can hardly doubt upon which side Nicholas Ferrar would range himself were he still among us, one can as little refer his relation with the Church of his day to standards and lines of party cleavage which had not then taken shape. He must be judged and estimated by the circumstances and standards of his time, and by those only. Then, as now, the struggle was between the Protestant or Puritan tendencies (in the sense, which we now associate with those terms, of schismatic) and the Catholic ideals of the English Reformers before their work had been tainted by importations from France and Germany; and it should be noted, too, that the term 'Protestant' was still not inconsistent with loyalty to the Catholic

standards. But the stake was, if possible, of more vital import than it is now — whether, in fact, the Church in England should formally repudiate, like the French and German Reformers, Catholic doctrine and external continuity with the past, or whether she should maintain these essentials at all cost. To-day the maintenance of the Catholicity of our Church is no longer in question among Churchmen; the point is rather whether that belief shall or shall not be translated into practice—between those who would see the Church consistently alive at all points, and those who would revert to the unedifying torpor of a hundred years since, when the clergy were materially prosperous and their duties and churches neglected. The parties of Ferrar's day were, in short, the schismatics as opposed to the Catholics; to-day they are rather the reactionaries as opposed to the progressives. The term 'Protestant' Ferrar accepted, like Laud, in the sense of people who protested against a definite grievance.

Again, we cannot too sharply draw a line of demarcation between the Reformation on the Continent, under the direction of Luther and Zwingli, Calvin, and Beza, and that in England. The former was a definite and deliberate act of schism from the Church of the present, and as definite a repudiation of that of the past. The Reformers demanded no freedom of thought; they

set up new and complex theologies of their own, compact of strange doctrines and individual eccentricities, and they enforced these by fire and torture, pillage and murder, just as Rome had done at her worst; with this difference only, that Roman error was an accretion round a solid nucleus of fact, while the new teaching could boast very little nucleus of fact at all. Everything the Reformers touched had been pulled about and distorted out of all recognition, and the Bible, as Matthew Arnold reminds us, was deliberately re-translated by them in the light of their new doctrines. The movement had begun legitimately enough in the revival of letters and the growth of a spirit of rational inquiry; but from this, as a Protestant historian observes—

‘the Reformer of Wittenberg turned away with horror. He had little or no sympathy with the new culture. He despised reason as heartily as any papal dogmatist could despise it. He hated the very thought of toleration or comprehension. He had been driven by a moral and intellectual compulsion to declare the Roman system a false one, but it was only to replace it by another system of doctrine just as elaborate, and claiming precisely the same infallibility.’

Luther was coarse and boorish withal, and violent

and unscrupulous in invective; and he gave bitter offence to Englishmen by what Green rightly terms the 'insolent abuse' which disfigured his attack upon their King. Whatever merits he may have had, the spirit of Christ was obviously not in him, and with such a man English Reformers did well to have no dealings. Sir Thomas More, the cultured scholar and statesman, the friend of Erasmus, and the natural leader of the party of religious reform in England, washed his hands of the whole business, and died a martyr for the old religion. Erasmus, perhaps the most far-sighted thinker in that tangled age, did his best to stem the tide of extravagance while continuing to plead for reform in the Church, and drew upon himself the hearty abuse of friend and foe alike. But he spoke wisely when he said, 'If every word had been true which Luther has said, he has so said it as to grudge truth the victory'; and still more wisely when he observed, 'The sum of religion is peace, which can only be when definitions are as few as possible, and opinion is left free on many subjects.' It should also be remembered that the famous Protest of 1529, which gave its name to the movement on the Continent, was primarily a political manifesto asserting the right of the secular prince to impose upon his subjects whatever religion he would, without any hint that the consciences of the subjects were even remotely concerned in the matter.

But while the Reformation movement on the Continent repelled scholars and thinkers by its unreasoning and tyrannical violence, the political turn which matters took in England rallied these elements more and more to its side. The quarrel with the old faith in England was not so much with its teaching as with its secular administration. The Pope had played fast and loose with the King in a matter of vital import to the nation at large, the dissolution of the King's originally irregular marriage with the wife of his dead brother; and the fear of civil war for lack of an undisputed heir to the throne intensified the national unrest. There was very little vulgar uprising and wild talk; for better or worse the business was put through firmly and unflinchingly by those in authority, and the outward appearance of decorum was observed. Even so it was bad enough, cruelly ruthless and unprincipled, but as compared with the Reformation in Germany it was dignity itself. And withal the King was perfectly clear upon one point; his object was to restore the old Church, not to create a new one, and that Church was to remain undisputably Christian and Catholic. The new Prayer-book, prepared under the King's direction and supervision, and showing on every page the marvellous perfection of which the English language was capable under the master-touch of Cranmer,

while retaining to its fullest the devotional loveliness of the ancient Catholic liturgies, presented a stately and adequate order of service round which all good Christians could rally. The great majority of the bishops kept their places, and the Reformers were careful to secure a valid and orderly succession of the ministry. Though much was taken, much was left; the Church in England came through the storm with rent cordage and tattered sails, but still unmistakably an integral unit of the Church Universal, flying the old flag, set on the old course, manned by the old officers and crew, and obeying the same Captain.

Unfortunately, however, the Reformation in England did not end here. With the death of the King in 1547, and the accession to power of the gang of unscrupulous ruffians who surrounded his feeble son, dark days supervened. The doctrines of German Protestantism obtained a footing in high quarters, and our English Reformation became identified for a while with the avowedly schismatic movement on the Continent. The moving spirit of the new *régime* was the Protector Somerset, who has been aptly described as 'in faith a Calvinist, in policy an Erastian, and in character a thief.' He and other greedy favourites of the Court cast covetous eyes upon the little that the locusts of King Henry had left, and proceeded to possess themselves of that little on the pretence of further

reformation of the Church. How thoroughly they did their work may be read in Dr. Jessopp's *Before the Great Pillage*, and only the early death of the young King in 1553 saved to the Church the meagre endowments from which the Protestant of our day is so anxious to 'liberate' her. The influence of Continental Protestantism was visible in such disgraceful incidents as the destruction of the College libraries at Oxford in 1550, when cartloads of valuable and beautiful manuscripts, 'guilty of no other superstition,' as the University historian has it, 'than red letters in their fronts and titles,' were ruthlessly destroyed; and Cranmer, then Archbishop of Canterbury, treated with deference the written admonitions of the schismatic Calvin to be active in the good work of 'eradicating superstition.' It seemed as if at length fanaticism and ignorance were to prevail in England as beyond the narrow seas.

But the tables were turned with dramatic suddenness on the accession of Queen Mary, a convinced and latterly a fanatical Roman Catholic, with strong views as to the trust to be placed in the honour of Protestants, born of abominable violations of the promises of Protestant statesmen to herself. The withdrawal of the permission accorded to her as a royal princess to permit the celebration of the Mass in her private chapel with the forms of the Roman rite, besides numberless petty

persecutions and indignities to which she had been subjected for her religion, had neither sweetened her temper nor improved her opinion of Protestantism, and the indefensible conspiracy to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne which was hers by right added fuel to the smouldering flame. The old religion was restored forthwith; and one of her first and most meritorious acts was to send to the Marshalsea Dr. Cox, the unspeakable Dean of Christ Church and Chancellor of the University, who was chiefly responsible for the destruction of the College libraries at Oxford in 1550; he found his way to Frankfort not long after and fell foul of John Knox, an excellent riddance (if only for a while) to the country of his birth. The principal advisers of the late King were arraigned for treason in connection with the attempt to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne, and the Duke of Northumberland was sent to the block without loss of time, after attempting in vain to win a pardon by recanting and declaring that he had been seduced by false prophets for sixteen years past. With as little delay Parliament repealed the ecclesiastical arrangements of the late reign, and reverted to those of King Henry. But the Kentish insurrection under Wyatt in 1554 forced the Queen's hand and hastened the Spanish marriage, which was followed in the same year by a formal reconciliation of the English State

with Rome. More momentous still was the furious persecution of the Protestants, which broke out on the revival by Parliament of the anti-Lollard statutes in the following year, under which, in the long three years that intervened before the death of the Queen, some three hundred persons were sent to the stake for heresy. Upon the more prominent victims, Cranmer, Latimer, Hooper, and the rest, it would be a mistake to waste pity (though it is noteworthy that Ridley and Latimer held doctrine regarding the Eucharist indistinguishable from that which we now define as the Real Presence); men had suffered at their hands for disagreeing with their views, and the turn of the wheel brought its revenge. 'Latimer, who would preach from a platform at some poor heretic that Henry VIII. was burning, stood being burned himself very manfully,' says a modern writer. Like their countrymen of the opposite party, they knew how to suffer as well as how to persecute, and when their time came they died like men. So, too, did the Roman Catholics who were subsequently martyred under Elizabeth. But the vast majority of those that fell in the Marian persecution were ignorant fanatics, who laid down their lives for shibboleths which they did not understand; and for their insane cruelty towards these unfortunates Mary and her advisers must bear the obloquy that history has apportioned to

them. A more serious matter was the permanent alienation of the country from the Roman Church, and the establishment upon a strong basis of that narrow and ignorant Protestantism, dour, obstinate, and wholly unloving and unlovely, which has lain like a blight upon English Christianity from that day to this.

One thing, however, it is important, as Mr. Wakeman reminds us, to note, especially in connection with later developments under the Stewarts, that in spite of the papal absolution granted to the nation on the formal submission of Mary and her Parliament, 'the Church of England had never been excommunicated by the Popes, no one having been excommunicated but Henry VIII. himself. Nor had the adherents of the Papacy been yet forbidden to attend the reformed English services. Nor did the Church of England in repudiating his supremacy, ever excommunicate the Pope.' Up to that time, therefore, Rome had held her hand and the English Church had said no more officially than was absolutely necessary, so that the door to a *modus vivendi*, if not to a reconciliation, was still open.

Among the earlier sufferers in the Marian persecution was Robert Ferrar, Bishop of St. David's, who was a relative, and according to one account a great-uncle, of Nicholas Ferrar of Little Gidding. Born in or about 1505, and educated at Cambridge,

he was at first an Augustinian canon in the Priory of St. Mary's, Oxford, where he came under the influence of some of the early Reformers, thereby attracting the attention of his diocesan, the Bishop of Lincoln. At the bishop's instance he was arrested, along with the notorious Garrett and Clark, in 1528, the bishop writing of them to Wolsey: 'They be perilous men, and have been the occasion of the corruption of youth. They have done much mischief, and for the love of God let them be handled thereafter.' Ferrar was taken to the Blackfriars in London, and escaped with an adjuration upon making a full submission, subsequently renouncing his errors at Oxford in public. Five years later he was sent with William Barlow (afterwards a bishop) on an embassy to Scotland. In 1536 he received a general licence from Cromwell to preach. Soon after he was appointed Prior of St. Oswald's, Nostell, near Pontefract; but he surrendered the priory to the Crown in 1540, receiving a pension of £80 per annum. He then definitely cast in his lot with the Reformers, and taking his D.D. degree became one of Cranmer's chaplains, and married a wife. In 1548 he was made Bishop of St. David's, the first bishop to be appointed under Royal Letters Patent and without capitular sanction: he was consecrated by Cranmer at Chertsey on September 9 of that year. In November he preached a violently

‘Protestant’ sermon at St. Paul’s Cross, vested as a Priest, and ‘spoke against Church and the sacrament of the altar and vestments.’ His career as a bishop was far from being smooth, and a strong and unscrupulous faction among his canons made endless trouble for him. He was constant, however, to such principles as he had retained, and when he was imprisoned by Mary he declined to be reconciled with Rome, on the ground that he had taken an oath both to Henry VIII. and Edward VI. never to admit the papal supremacy. In May 1554 he was formally deprived of his bishopric; in February of the following year he was tried and condemned by Gardiner at St. Saviour’s, Southwark, for violating his vow of chastity, and he was burned at Carmarthen, the chief town of his diocese, on March 30. The story of his end is told in Foxe, in whose pages it was afterwards studied to some purpose by his younger and more famous relative, Nicholas Ferrar of Little Gidding. Froude describes him as ‘a man of large humanity, justice, and uprightness, neither conspicuous as a theologian nor prominent as a preacher, but remarkable chiefly for good sense and a kindly imaginative tenderness.’ Another writer regards him as ‘a very ordinary man, who, with excellent intentions, was quite unable to cope with the difficulties of his position’; but it may safely be said that the man

whom Cranmer selected for his chaplain, and who in that difficult time became a bishop, besides electing to be burned in preference to breaking his oath and forgoing his principles, was at least above the average, both in intellect and morals. He is commemorated by a rather commonplace window in Southwark Cathedral, in the chapter-house of which he made answer to his accusers.

The prospects of the nation, whether in Church or State, have seldom been more gloomy than they were at the accession of Elizabeth. Things were in confusion on every side, and change and reform were imperative. The position of the Church was especially dangerous. The persecutions had made the name of Rome odious to the people, and in the inevitable reaction there was serious risk that the Church would repudiate her Catholicity as well as the Papal supremacy. But Elizabeth was a cool and clear-headed woman, who would not be hurried into extreme courses. She had herself conformed to the old worship for five years, and such changes as she desired were introduced at the first gradually and almost unnoticed. The English Litany had been in use uninterruptedly, even under Mary; the Council of Trent was sitting and continued to sit for five years longer, so that compromise, in the existing political tangle, was far from impossible. Elizabeth's personal leanings were towards Catholicism, though not

towards the Papacy; her most trusted minister, Cecil, made no secret of his Protestantism. The Prayer-book was brought into use within six months of the Queen's accession, the form being that of King Edward's Second Book, but with some important alterations in the Catholic direction. One of these erased from the Litany the petition for deliverance 'from the tyranny of the Bishop of Rome and all his detestable enormities'; some alterations in the service for Holy Communion restored the doctrine of the Real Presence, and the vestments prescribed by the First Prayer-book were retained until further notice. The great majority of the clergy conformed, and those who were recalcitrant were quietly ejected and subjected to light punishment when they were not ignored. Uniformity and the acknowledgment of the Royal Supremacy were the two main objects of the Queen's ecclesiastical policy.

Unluckily the Queen had to reckon with an irreconcilable faction, the refugee Protestants who had fled from persecution at home to the Continental centres of religious unrest, Frankfort and Basle, Zurich and Geneva. Among the Lutherans they had met with little sympathy on account of their low sacramental doctrines; and most of them turned therefore to Calvin, who, in addition to relentless cruelty in dealing with

those who differed from him (in four years fifty-seven persons suffered death with his approval in Geneva alone), repudiated episcopacy, liturgical worship, and in practice the sacraments. Thus they developed aims that ran counter to the whole spirit of the English Reformation, and they returned to England grimly determined to impose the teaching and discipline of Calvin upon the English Church. The Queen evidently failed to grasp the full significance of their demands, and attempted to placate them by appointing some of their number to high offices in the Church, with the disastrous result that then, and in varying degrees ever since, the Church has had to reckon with enemies within as well as without her fold, while a plausible status has been given to doctrine and practice contrary to her essential spirit and tradition, thus seriously retarding her natural growth and development. Fortunately, however, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker, was not one of these; he was untainted with the 'Germanical natures' of the returned exiles, and was a scholarly and convinced Catholic. His tenure of the archiepiscopal see was not free from mistakes, but the Church owes him a great debt, nevertheless, for his stubborn stand against the dangerous innovators of whom mention has just been made. But Puritanism (as we may now term the tendencies of the irreconcilable party) had

definitely intruded itself, and the result was two centuries of trouble, ecclesiastical and civil, whenever and by whatever means the disturbers found it possible to create it; while a disagreeable temper was grafted upon our once 'merrie' England, which has not unjustly made her sons the best-hated people in the world. It is quite true that coincident with this there has been for England a wonderful period of material prosperity, which Protestant writers never weary in attributing to the Puritan ascendancy in the councils of the State. But when one recalls who it was that said, and when and to Whom: 'All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me, one may be pardoned an occasional twinge of doubt as to the validity of the deduction that therefore Puritanism was a good and desirable thing.

Be that as it may, it is certain that the subsequent action of the Pope on the one hand and the unbridled violence and vulgarity of the Puritans on the other, rendered any reconciliation with Rome impossible, and all that remained was to make the best of a very difficult situation. In the forty-six years of Elizabeth's reign the nation prospered and 'found itself' in a fashion unexampled in its previous history. The whole force of the Papacy was put forward for its destruction; the vast political power which the Pope could still command was turned against it, and, what was in-

initely more dangerous, a band of seminary priests, scholars, enthusiasts, and absolutely fearless, was let loose upon the land, doing more by their unflinching piety to restore the lost cause than all the embattled armies and fleets of Europe. Elizabeth encountered the priests with a severity not less ruthless than that shown by her sister to the Protestant fanatics, though with better justification, seeing that the issues at stake were her own life and the political existence of her kingdom. Were it not for the unifying effect of the external peril, the priests might very well have won the day. But the long and desperate fight with Spain and papal Europe, the tremendous battle for the right of entry into the New World, the cruelty with which the Inquisition retaliated upon English prisoners of war the sufferings of the seminary priests in England, all combined to harden the national heart, and the breach with Rome grew daily wider and more hopeless. The blossoming of a great literature put the finishing touches to the national movement, and the era of Elizabeth became for Englishmen a golden age of great achievements, of heroic personalities, and of a passionate patriotism which stood to the nation in place of a religion. The Church was far from dead, but for the time being it counted for little. Shakespeare probably spoke for himself, and certainly voiced the spirit of his time, when he

saw in ‘knowledge the wing wherewith we fly to heaven.’ But whatever the Church attempted in the way of the reform of abuses or towards the orderly conduct of the services was opposed by the Puritan faction, who through their mouthpiece, Thomas Cartwright, demanded in the true spirit of their master, that ‘false teachers’—meaning people who did not share their own views—should be put to death, he adding on his own account, ‘If this be bloody or extreme, I am content to be so counted by the Holy Ghost.’ The Prayer-book was to them ‘culled and picked from that Popish dunghill’; the Burial Service objectionable as containing prayers for the departed; and worse than all, the liturgy included prayers that all men might be saved, contrary to the teaching of Calvin. The Puritans, in short, preferred Calvin before Christ, and intended that the Church should do so too.

With the clearing of the issues, however, the two parties, Catholic and Puritan, steadily defined themselves, and the latter years of the Queen’s reign witnessed a decided revival of Church life. Bancroft, Bilson, and Richard Hooker came forward to speak for the Church, clearly striking and maintaining the Christian and Catholic note in their statement of the Church position. The last-named did especial service by his vigorous repudiation of the doctrine of the infallibility of Calvin. The records of episcopal visitations show that

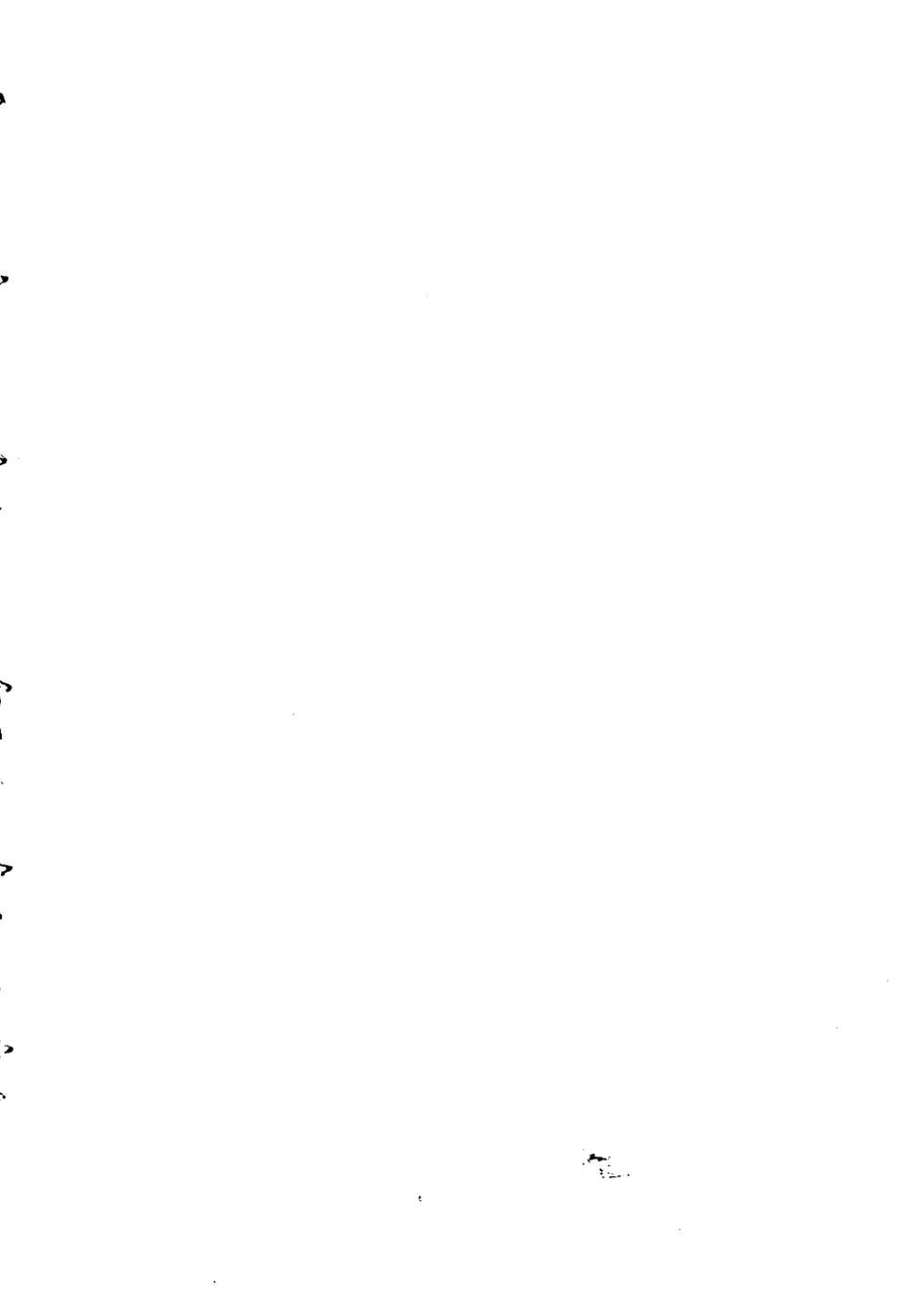
energetic attempts were being made to put the parochial system into something like order, though the mischief wrought by past negligence and rascality was too great to be repaired in a day or even in a generation. 'The Churches,' says the late Mr. Shorthouse, 'were neglected, the monuments of the dead were rifled, the clergy were despised, and what was more, were worthy of contempt. The famous speech of Luther's wife, that somehow they did not pray as they did in the old times, was true of England.' The rising cloud of Puritanical unfaith brought home to thoughtful and far-seeing men something of the extent of the danger which threatened, and at the death of the great Queen in 1603 the Church was better prepared to set her house in order and to meet her foes than she had been since the death of King Henry. This, then, was the state of things when the family of the Ferrars appeared on the stage where they were to play so distinguished and important a part.

## CHAPTER I

THE UPBRINGING OF NICHOLAS FERRAR  
(1593—1613)

‘Happy those early dayes, when I  
Shin’d in my Angell-infancy !’

SOME time in the early sixteenth century there migrated to Hertford one John Ferrar. He was related to Robert Ferrar, the bishop, and came from the same part of Yorkshire. His wife's name was Mary, and she outlived him and took out probate of his will in 1590, the year of his death. He was the father of Nicholas Ferrar the elder, who was born in 1545, and, proceeding to London, rose in ‘the spacious times of great Elizabeth’ to affluence and respect as a merchant of proved ability and uprightness, insomuch that the Queen granted him the right to wear his family coat-of-arms with a difference, and a new crest, both of which are still borne by his descendants. He was Master of the Skinners' Company, and the trusted friend of Raleigh, Drake, and Hawkins, who used to meet and discuss the affairs of the Virginia Company, in which he was keenly interested, at his house in St. Sythe's Lane. It is probable that he had two brothers, Henry and John, but of them





NICHOLAS FERRAR, SENIOR, 1617

*By special permission, from the portrait by Cornelius Janssen at  
Magdalene College, Cambridge*

nothing is known. His son, John, thus writes of him :

‘Nicholas Ferrar, the father, was brought up in the profession of a merchant adventurer, and traded very extensively to the East and West Indies, and to all the celebrated seats of commerce. He lived in high repute in the city, where he joined in commercial matters with Sir Thomas and Sir Hugh Middleton and Mr. Bateman. He was a man of liberal hospitality, but governed his house with great order. He kept a good table, at which he frequently received persons of the greatest eminence, Sir John Hawkins, Sir Francis Drake, Sir Walter Raleigh, and others, with whom he was an adventurer: and in all their expeditions he was ever in the highest degree attentive to the planting the Christian religion in the New World. A zealous lover of the Church he was, and ever as ready to supply King and State with what was required of him. £300 upon a privy seal he willingly lent, and Queen Elizabeth writ him esquire. The exemplification of his arms is still in his family.’

His friend, Francis White, the preacher who was at his cost installed at his parish church, St. Benet Sherehog, which had also been repaired and re-seated at his expense, said of him in the sermon delivered at his funeral, that he never came into old Mr. Ferrar’s company but that saying of our Saviour Christ came into his mind, when He saw

Nathanael coming unto Him: Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile. Francis White, it should here be noted, was himself a man of mark, and his influence upon the members of the Ferrar household could not fail to have been considerable. He was or became rector of St. Peter's, Cornhill, and divinity reader at St. Paul's, and figured conspicuously in the ecclesiastical controversies of the day; and after holding the deanery of Carlisle, he was bishop successively of Carlisle, Norwich, and Ely. He died in February 1638. It speaks well for old Mr. Ferrar's powers of discrimination that he recognised White's ability, and was 'the chief means of bringing him out of the country to London,' where 'often in the week he was pleased to afford Mr. Ferrar his good company, who wonderfully joyed in it.'

This Nicholas Ferrar married, about the year 1575, Mary, the daughter of Laurence Woodnoth, of an ancient Cheshire family. She was a woman of much personal charm and remarkable strength of character, deeply religious, and of prevailing influence. 'She was surpassed by none,' says her son, 'in comeliness of body or excellence of beauty. She was of modest and sober deportment, and of great prudence. Of few words, yet when she spoke, Bishop Linsel was used to say of her, he knew no woman superior to her in eloquence, true judgment, or wisdom, and that few were equal to her in charity towards man, or piety towards God,' and, continues Peckard:

'The children born to these virtuous parents



MARY FERRAR, 1617

*By special permission, from the portrait by Cornelius Janssen at  
Magdalene College, Cambridge*



were all constantly trained in virtue and religion. Their daily practice was to read, and to speak by memory some portion of the Scriptures, and parts of the *Book of Martyrs*: they were also made acquainted with such passages of history as were suited to their tender years. They were all instructed in music; in performing on the organ, viol, and lute, and in the theory and practice of singing; in the learned and modern languages; in curious needleworks, and all the accomplishments of that time. The young men, when arrived at years of discretion, had permission each to choose his profession, and then no expense was spared to bring him to a distinguished excellence in it. For this was an invariable maxim with the parents, that having laid a firm foundation in religion and virtue, they would rather give them a good education without wealth, than wealth without a good education.'

Another version of Bishop Linsel's testimony makes him admire 'her constant daily reading Scripture, her singing psalms, and her often reading in the *Book of Martyrs*, her going to Church-prayers Wednesdays and Fridays, her having heard, as it was computed in her lifetime, twelve thousand sermons, for she was also addicted that way.'

Of Mrs. Ferrar we shall hear more anon. Her children were John (1590-1657); Erasmus, a barrister, who died before 1613; Nicholas (1593-1637), the subject of this memoir; William, a bar-

rister (*circa* 1593-1637), who emigrated to Virginia; Richard, born in 1596 and still living in 1638, a merchant; Joyce, who may have been living in 1613, and certainly died before 1620; and Susanna (1581-1657), who married John Collett. There were probably other children, for Nicholas wrote in 1613 of 'my dearest brother Erasmus, and your other children that are departed in the Lord,' but there is no further record of them.

Nicholas was born in London on February 22, 1592-3, and was baptized six days later at the church of St. Mary Stayning. Possibly the family had not then taken the 'great house' in St. Sythe's Lane, the parish church of which was St. Benet Sherehog, but they were certainly occupying it a very short time after this date. Sise Lane, as it is now called, opens out of Wood Street, Cheapside; the name stands for St. Osyth, to whom the parish church was originally dedicated, to be displaced in favour of St. Benet at some subsequent period. His godmother was a Mrs. Riggs, who, says Peckard, 'recommended herself highly to the esteem of Queen Elizabeth, by an heroic act which she performed upon the sea-shore at Dover as her story relates at large,' in 1588. What this feat was does not now appear. The anniversary of his christening he reckoned more memorable than his birthday, as being the day of his reception into the Catholic Church. He was named Nicholas after his father, 'a beautiful child of a fair complexion and light-coloured hair like his mother. From the first he was delicate and given to 'aguish distempers.'

‘At four years of age he was sent to school, being of a tractable disposition and parts lively. At five he could read perfectly, or repeat with propriety and grace a chapter in the Bible, which the parents made the daily exercise of their children. By the brightness of his parts, and the uncommon strength of his memory, he attained with great ease and quickness whatsoever he set himself to learn; yet he was also remarkably studious; being a rare instance of the union of the brightest parts with the most intense industry. From the early possession of his mind with ideas of piety and virtue, and a love for historical information, the Bible in his very early years became to him the book above all others most dear and estimable; and next to this in his esteem was Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, from which he could repeat perfectly the history of his near kinsman, Bishop Ferrar. He was particularly fond of all historical relations, and when engaged in this sort of reading, the day did not satisfy him, but he would borrow from the night; insomuch that his mother would frequently seek him out, and force him to partake of some proper recreation. Hence, even in his childhood, his mind was so furnished with historical anecdotes, that he could at any time draw off his schoolfellows from their play, who would eagerly surround him, and with the utmost attention listen to his little tales, always calculated to inspire them with a love of piety and goodness, and excite in them a virtuous imitation.’

In the year 1598 he was brought by his school-master, Mr. Francis, to be confirmed by Bishop Bancroft at St. Magnus' Church, and the little lad somehow contrived to go up twice to receive the bishop's blessing. When asked by his master why he did so, he replied characteristically, 'I did it because it was a good thing to have the bishop's prayers and blessing twice, and I have got it.' Not for nothing, evidently, was he known to his friends from a very early age as St. Nicholas. It should be noted here that the practice of confirming children thus early was certainly recognised and even prevalent at this time. Among the advocates of the practice may be numbered Jeremy Taylor and George Herbert, and Hacket records that Bishop Williams, when journeying in his diocese, made a point of confirming young children. A still earlier precedent may be found in St. Hugh, the famous predecessor of Bishop Williams in the See of Lincoln.

It was not astonishing that such a child should attract the attention of the clever men who visited at the Ferrar house. One of these was Mr. Antony Wotton, a learned Gresham professor, who subsequently got himself entangled in an interminable theological controversy upon Arianism, the echoes of which were still rumbling after thirty years of wordy and unprofitable warfare. The story is thus told in a letter by Francis Peck, rector of Godeby, Leicestershire, quoting from an edition of John Ferrar's *Life of Nicholas* that he had prepared for the press, which was afterwards lent to a friend and lost. The letter is dated September 10, 1735:

‘For his apparel, his disposition in these his so young years, was to be neat, handsome, and plain. One time his mother and her maids were making bands for the children, and setting fine laces on them. Whereupon he came very soberly to his mother, and earnestly prayed her, that his bands might have no lace upon them, but be made little plain bands.—“Why, child,” saith she, “will you not have your bands made like the rest of your brothers?”—“No, I pray you, dear mother,” said he, “let mine be such little plain bands as Mr. Antony Wotton wears; for I will be a preacher as he is.” Mr. Wotton was then newly come into the parlour to visit Mr. Ferrar and his wife (as he once a week, if not oftener, used to do), and he and Mrs. Ferrar heartily laughed at the child’s earnestness in that particular: for he would have no nay.

‘This Mr. Wotton was a learned divine and reader of the divinity lecture at Gresham College, and always made very much of Nich. Ferrar when he came; posing him ever in many things to try his wit and learning, and was wonderfully taken with the child’s forwardness. And the child was ever a great observer of him, and would hearken very diligently to his discourses at all times when he came to the house.’

Before he was eight years old his parents decided upon sending him to a school at Enborne, near Newbury, kept by a Mr. Brooks, evidently a man of ability and character, whither his two elder brothers, John and Erasmus, had already

preceded him. But while the preparations for his departure were on hand, the little lad underwent a somewhat precocious, but evidently none the less real, spiritual experience.

‘He was but six years of age, and being one night unable to sleep, a fit of scepticism seized his mind, and gave him the greatest perplexity and uneasiness. He doubted “Whether there was a God?” and if there was, “What was the most acceptable mode of serving Him?” In extreme grief he rose at midnight, cold and frosty, and went down to a grass plat in the garden, where he stood long time sad and pensive, musing, and thinking seriously upon the great doubt which thus extremely perplexed him. At length, throwing himself upon his face upon the ground, and spreading out his hands, he cried aloud, “Yes, there is, there must be a God: and He, no question, if I duly and earnestly seek it of Him, will teach me not only how to know, but how to serve Him acceptably. He will be with me all my life here, and at the end hereafter will make me happy.”’

From this time forward the boy regarded himself as dedicated to God, with a promise of the Divine Blessing if he persevered; and the impression of the experience remained with him, fresh and indelible, to the end of his life.

Mr. Brooks was one who, after attaining distinction as a preacher in London, had voluntarily retired into comparative obscurity to devote him-

self to educational work. He gathered about him a group of able instructors, reserving to himself the general supervision and control, which he exercised to good purpose. The boys were excellently taught all round, but especially they were trained to repeat the Church Catechism, the Psalter, and the epistles and gospels, 'for which the youth's vast memory served him to good purpose and to his great consolation, when many years after he travelled and fell desperately sick among those who take it for a mark of heresy in a traveller to carry about him an English Bible.' Among the other lads he shone pre-eminent—'such a progress he made in Latin, logic, and Greek, as he was the prime scholar of his years, to the admiration not only of his schoolmaster, but of Mr. Brooks himself.' 'He strengthened his memory by daily exercise: he was a great proficient in writing and arithmetic, and attained such excellence in shorthand as to be able to take accurately a sermon or speech on any occasion. He was also well skilled in vocal and instrumental music.' He was extraordinarily modest withal, and disliked being praised in public at the expense of his schoolfellows, and it soon became clear that he would be as conspicuous morally as mentally. By the time that the boy was thirteen Mr. Brooks 'earnestly persuaded his parents to remove him to the university of Cambridge, "For," said he, "he loseth precious time, and is more fit for the university"; and soon after he would needs carry him to Cambridge, to Clare Hall, and there presents him to his tutor, Dr. Linsel,' giving the

college authorities 'such a character of Nicholas Ferrar as they all admired, and all confessed afterwards was so.' Linsel, himself an eminent divine, and afterwards a bishop, admitted 'that he himself learnt more by teaching him, than he could teach him,' and his course at the university was brilliant. He soon made his mark as a hard worker. 'His attention and diligence was such, that it was observed his chamber might be known by the candle that was last put out at night, and the first lighted in the morning.' In the college community he was remarkable for his success as a peacemaker, and he was as diligent in his attendance at chapel as at his studies. 'As for the time of his admission into our college at Clare Hall,' writes one of his contemporaries, 'he was, as I did then guess by his stature and dimensions, about thirteen years of age, when yet his deportment was such as spake him more a man than many are at four and twenty: there was so sweet a mixture in him of gravity with affability, and modesty with civility.' And his influence was no less with his elders than with the younger men. 'His good old tutor would often change his mind upon his advice, and then would tell others of the society pleasantly, that if his pupil took them to task, he would alter them too.' And again: 'May God keep him in a right mind! For if he should turn schismatic, or heretic, he would make work for all the world. Such a head, such power of argument! such a tongue, and such a pen! such a memory withal he hath, with such indefatigable pains, that, all these joined together, I

know not who would be able to contend with him.'

He had gone up in 1606 as a commoner: he was raised in his second year to the status of a fellow-commoner, 'performing all such exercises as were appointed him in that first year, nay month, to the admiration of all.' In 1610, 'after the commendable performances of his acts *in Scholis Publicis*', he was made a Bachelor of Arts; 'and his worth was so well known in the college,' writes Dr. Robert Byng to Barnabas Oley forty-four years later, 'that he was selected to make the oration upon the coronation day after his proceeding, which was performed with great applause.' This was on July 25, 1610. Shortly after he was unanimously elected a fellow of his college, and he continued in residence for nearly three years longer, reading for his degree of M.A., which, in those days, was something more than a form.

Some seven or eight miles west of Cambridge, at Bourne Bridge, there dwelt Nicholas' married sister, Susanna, who had married John Collett in 1600. She is described as 'a lover of learning,' 'a gentlewoman of an excellent understanding, much reading, and solid piety': and fellows and tutors, as well as her cultured brother, were glad to resort to her company. Driven also by continual ill-health, he was often glad to take refuge there on the low hills raised a hundred feet or more above the malarial fens, though without permitting any break to his studies, which he pursued there as at Cambridge. The household included 'divers young nieces, bred up with their mother,

trained up in daily reading chapters in the Bible and David's Psalms, whom he (N. F.) instructed in all good things, with exhortations in writing and letters'; or, as in Dr. Jebb's version of the biography, 'there he began his labour of love to her children, whom he would catechise and exhort with a fatherly goodness, and he continued to his dying day their true spiritual friend and father.' The three eldest of these fortunate girls were Mary, Susanna, and Anne, of whom we shall hear more in connection with Little Gidding. The ties thus formed at Bourne were only broken by death.

Meanwhile his health, with the constant recurrence of the 'aguish distempers' of his early youth, was giving cause for grave anxiety: it is easy now to understand that Cambridge and the fen country was the worst possible place for a man of his constitution. Dr. Butler could only suggest starvation as a remedy. 'You must henceforth,' he said, 'deal with this disorder when it comes to you, as men do with beggars when they have a mind to disuse them from their houses, give them nothing, but let them go as they came.' But the patient grew steadily worse, until the doctor pronounced that 'nothing but travel would preserve his life, and that scarce would prolong it beyond his thirty-fifth or thirty-sixth year.' In the following spring an opportunity presented itself, through the interest of Dr. Scott, the Master of Clare Hall, for Nicholas to visit the Palatinate in the retinue of the Princess Elizabeth, then newly married to Frederick, the Count Palatine.

‘The doctor carrying him one day to court, presented him to the princess to kiss her hand, and introduced him into the acquaintance of the courtiers that waited on her highness’; and in her train he sailed from Margate on the 25th April 1613. As a parting compliment his university conferred upon him the degree of Master of Arts, without delaying to exact a full compliance with the usual conditions. He left behind him a pathetic letter to his family, referring to the death of his brother Erasmus, and other gaps in the family circle, and recording a vow, to be fulfilled after many chequered years:

‘If the Good Lord God be merciful unto me, and bring me safe home again, I will all the days of my life serve Him in praising His Holy Name and exhorting others; yea, in His tabernacle, and in His holy sanctuary will I serve Him, and shall account the lowest place in His house better and more honourable than the greatest crown in the world.’

## CHAPTER III

NICHOLAS FERRAR'S WANDERJÄHRE  
(1613—1618)

'Much have I seen and known ; cities of men  
And manners, climates, councils, governments,  
Myself not least, but honoured of them all.'

THE voyage to Flushing occupied the travellers some four unhappy days, and the experiences of Nicholas Ferrar proved to be no exception to the common rule. But Nature's remedy, though drastic, was effectual, 'and his being very sea-sick cleared him, as Dr. Butler foretold it would, of his aguish humours.' His company was, no doubt, congenial. He travelled 'in the same ship with the master of the green cloth, who took an especial liking to him'; it is highly probable that another companion among the train of the princess was Francis Quarles, the author of *Pious Emblems*, then her cup-bearer and afterwards her secretary, whom Ferrar may have known at Cambridge. With him he must have had many points of sympathy, and it seems strange that we have no record of their meeting, either now or later. He had no sooner landed than his thirst for knowledge asserted itself. 'They all took notice of

him for a great observer,' says the chronicler. 'He quickly got language enough for the despatch of common affairs, having ever his Dutch book with his English translation about him.' Neglecting the stock sights he applied himself to the economic and political aspects of the country, its industries and manufactures, its methods of providing for the poor and impotent — of everything, in fact, that is involved in efficient government. His position as an honoured member of the train of the princess ensured him consideration and respect everywhere, and as she passed on to the Hague and Amsterdam he made the best use of his opportunities. As might have been expected, the varieties of Continental Protestantism had for him an especial interest.

'In all these towns Mr. Ferrar visited the several meeting-houses of the Brownists, Anabaptists, and other Protestant dissenters, both to observe their manners and teaching, and to see if all were answerable to his own former reading. At all which times he noted their errors, and greatly confirmed himself in his own opinions. The Jews' synagogue likewise he left not unseen, and their orders. But that which chiefly attracted his notice at Amsterdam was their guest, or almshouses, where young children of both sexes are brought up to learn handicrafts. Here he got particular information of all their proceedings, and very liberally rewarded the attendants. He particularly admired the stateliness and neatness of the Dutch in these

public edifices, and the wonderful good orders and rules by which they are governed. He also visited their churches, heard their sermons, and attended all their religious rites and ceremonies. He was also charmed with their cleanliness and the many good orders everywhere observed to that intent. And he observed that the whole nation kept their houses elegantly neat in all places. When he came to his lodgings he regularly entered all his observations in a book which he kept for that purpose.'

To what good purpose all this was accomplished, the administration of the Virginia Company and the organisation of Little Gidding were in after years to bear effective witness.

But if court life offered opportunities, it soon became clear to him that freedom afforded them upon a larger scale, and Ferrar decided for freedom. The princess was now directing her course to the Palatinate, and Ferrar desired to visit Westphalia and the towns and cities of upper Germany, travelling by Bremen, Staad, Hamburg, Lunenburg, Lubeck and Leipsic. The princess was loth to part from him, and hinted through her attendants at advancement; indeed, he was practically offered the post of her secretary if he would proceed with the court to Heidelberg. 'But he answered that he aimed at lower things, and was not qualified for such an employment. He was then introduced to her royal highness, and kissed her hand, who bade him farewell, and wished him much happiness in his travels.' He

lost no time in setting out for Hamburg, and soon had a gruesome reminder of the perils of travel in those unsettled times.

‘On his way thither he travelled for some time with a person for his guide, who had but one eye. After some days’ travel they passed by a wood, where was a gibbet and some bodies hanging in chains. “Now,” said the postman, “sir, look yonder; those villains there hanging, some years since set upon my waggon, wherein were an English youth, and a Hamburg merchant, then newly come out of Spain. The rogues carried us into a wood on a cold frosty morning and stripped us: and they found good gold tied up in the shirts of the gentlemen who had travelled with me, which they took, then drank up our wine, and went away laughing. But sometime after, they, still using the same trade, set upon another waggon, whose passengers made some resistance, when they shot three of them dead in the waggon, and then fled. They were afterwards taken, and there hanged as you see.” “Your history is true,” said Mr. Ferrar; “for that English youth was my brother. He has told me this story himself. And when I first saw you, I knew you to be the postman with whom he travelled, for he described you as having but one eye.”’

The brother who had this unpleasant experience was probably Richard, the ‘merchant,’ who is known to have visited Hamburg on business in

1616, and may well, therefore, have been there at an earlier date.

At Hamburg he was cordially received by the English community, and especially by his father's old friend, Mr. Gore, deputy-governor of the merchant adventurers. He was plentifully supplied with money from home, which 'was abundantly repaid to his good parents by that excellent character his countrymen gave of him in their letters to their correspondents in London.' He took daily lessons from 'a scholar of that country' in 'the high Dutch language' — that is, German — and gained considerable proficiency in it. In his food and drink he was simple and abstemious, and he attracted remark as a brilliant and improving conversationalist. And, as before in Holland, he lost no opportunities of acquainting himself with all that was noteworthy in the place and its people, recording in shorthand everything in his book of observations. How long he stayed at Hamburg does not appear, though it was certainly for some time: indeed, the whole chronology of these *wanderjahre* is difficult and uncertain, and can only be fixed, even approximately, by chance allusions.

Adhering to his original programme, however, Ferrar left Hamburg upon his further travels, and taking probably the route already indicated, he arrived at Leipsic, where he resolved to make a prolonged stay, 'both to perfect himself in the high Dutch language, and to gain also what other knowledge and learning he could in that place; and to acquaint himself with the manner of order-

ing all things in that university.' He took good lodgings, and appeared in public 'very gallant and rich in apparel,' according to the wish of his parents, 'that so, according to the mode of the world, he might have the easier admittance into all places, and all respectable company.'

'Presently he made enquiries for the ablest masters in every art, whom he would gain entirely, if gold and good words could gain them, to teach him their mystery. His personal resorting with the utmost diligence to all the exercises performed in the public schools, made him to be very much noticed. He gained great reputation for his uncommon abilities, his diligence, and his sweet deportment; his extraordinary quickness in attaining whatsoever he set himself to, the elegant Latin which he spake with the utmost readiness, and his abundant knowledge in several sorts of learning. The universal admiration he obtained was also heightened by his being so very young. His acquaintance was desired by all the learned men of that university: and he being free in all courtesy to enter into discourse with them, many every day resorted to him. But finding that this took up too much of his time, he privately retired into lodgings in a village in the neighbourhood, and there enjoyed a better opportunity to follow the studies he had resolved upon; his tutors attending him as they had done before. Among other curious arts which he learnt abroad he was taught the skill

of artificial memory. The Germans are exquisite mechanicks, and to every trade he would, if he could, serve an honourable apprenticeship of a week or a fortnight to each. Their painters, weavers, dyers and smiths were much at his lodgings and at his service, which enabled him to treat with artisans in their proper terms; he could maintain a dialogue with an architect in his own phrases; he could talk with the mariners in their sea terms, knowing the word for almost every rope and every pin in the ship. He took notes of all in shorthand, when he was by himself; though his memory was so strangely faithful that many times he could recall the circumstances of time and place with the very words he had heard many years ago.'

Ferrar soon became a marked man, and it was conjectured by all who knew him that he must be a man of vast ambitions; he was 'represented as a person who had some great intent in his mind,' although, on the other hand, the delicacy of his constitution was so apparent 'that it was feared by all that he could not live to be a man of any considerable years.' Accounts of his application to study reached his parents in England, and they wrote earnestly advising some relaxation, and promising him unlimited money and time 'to perfect his intentions.'

How long exactly he stayed at Leipsic does not appear, but his next move was to Prague, where, says Peckard, 'he abode a considerable time, till he was able to converse fluently in the high Dutch

language.' Here he seems to have made a sort of headquarters, whence he visited Augsburg, Strasburg, Nuremburg, Ulm, Spires, 'from one prince's court to another,' closely observing and studying, as his manner was, their armaments, their history, economy, their habits and industries. At length his wanderings took him to Vienna, where he presented himself at the court of the Emperor, and so bidding farewell to Germany, turned his steps towards the Tyrolese Alps and Venice. Dr. Jebb's biography expressly states that he descended the mountains on the Venetian side at the very commencement of Lent, so that he must have crossed them in January or February. On the way he met with an adventure which might have had awkward consequences, the escape from which he always regarded as providential.

'As he rode one day upon some very narrow and dangerous passages of the Alps, his guide being somewhat before him, suddenly from the side of a hill came an ass laden with a great piece of timber. The passage down the hill was extremely narrow, on one side very high and precipitous above him, and on the other also precipitously steep and fearful, so that if any man fell, nothing but immediate death could be expected. The timber did not lie, as it first laid down, lengthwise, but quite across the ass's back, and reached the whole breadth of the pass from one side to the other, and the beast came down the hill apace. The guide, who was advanced a few yards, and had passed the narrow

crevice through which the ass came into the common road, seeing Mr. Ferrar's situation, cried out in terror. The man's exclamation caused Mr. Ferrar to look up, who was carefully regarding his horse's steps, and was then upon the extreme brink of the precipice. There was but a moment between him and certain destruction; when in that moment, just as the beast came upon him, she tripped, and by that motion the timber was turned the right way as it was at first laid on. Mr. Ferrar then suddenly stopping his horse upon the very edge of the precipice, there stood still, till, as it pleased God, the beast went quietly on with her burthen, and passed him without any harm but a slight stroke from the timber. After this providential escape, for which he returned his most devout thanks to God, he proceeded on his road.'

In view of the fact that the plague was raging in the cities of southern Germany whence Ferrar had just come, the Venetian authorities detained him in quarantine for thirty days, or, according to Jebb, for forty days, which, he says, fortunately coincided with the forty days' fast of Lent. Thus, says Jebb,

'he was forced to do penance both under a restraint from company and from flesh, though neither of these was any great constraint upon one already so mortified. Here he had leisure enough to recollect his thoughts, to revise his notes, and to reduce his observations into method.'

He spent this time of fasting and sequestration from the world very agreeably. In the morning he went up into a neighbouring mountain, where abundance of wild thyme and rosemary grew; there with a book or two and with his God, whom He met in the closest walks of his mind, having spent the day in reading, meditation, and prayer, he came down in the evening to an early supper (his only set meal) of oil and fish. He omitted not his offices and exercises of devotion morning and evening and at midnight in his travels, for to serve and please his Maker was the travail of his soul. He needed not many books, who was his own concordance, and had the New Testament in a manner without book. And if the time and place would not serve him to kneel, yet then and there he made the lowest prostrations of his soul and spirit.'

It is worth noting here that in his strict observance of Lent Nicholas Ferrar was in that age nothing singular. There is abundant evidence to show that Lent was strictly kept in the English Church until long after this time, but perhaps the most striking testimony to the fact of its contemporary observance is in the dispensation granted by George Abbot, the Puritan Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1610, 'to Sir E. Conway, his wife, and two others whom he might choose, to eat flesh at prohibited times, as fish did not agree with him, provided that he did so privately to avoid scandal, and paid 13s. 4d. a year to the poor of his parish.' Almost exactly a hundred years

later, Swift complained of the strictness with which pious folk observed Lent: 'I hate Lent; I hate different diets, and furmity and butter, and herb porridge; and sour devout faces of people, who only put on their religion for seven weeks.' And the early followers of John Wesley were exceedingly particular in the observance of fast-days.

On resuming his journey Ferrar took the road through Padua to Venice, where he was cordially received by Sir Dudley Carleton, the English ambassador to the Venetian Republic. He dined with the ambassador daily, and held frequent converse with him. As Carleton left Venice at the end of 1615 it is clear that Ferrar must have entered Venetian territory the previous spring—that is, about Easter of that year, which fell on April 9. We may fairly assume that the two lengthened tours which he made in Germany occupied respectively the summers of 1613 and 1614. It is impossible, for reasons which will appear later on, however to suppose, as Professor Mayor does, that he proceeded immediately to Rome, so as to reach there during the Holy Week that preceded this same Easter.

'Having stayed a convenient time at Venice,' Ferrar turned back to Padua, where he settled for a long stay, with a view to studying at the University. His health was showing signs of wear after his travels, and he probably needed a rest: also Padua presented especial opportunities for the study of medicine, and he himself held the Physic Fellowship at Clare Hall, which proved that he already knew more than a little of the

subject. For such studies Padua presented special facilities, of a kind which were unknown at other seats of learning. Evelyn visited it in 1645 and waxed enthusiastic in praise of 'the Scholes of this flourishing and ancient University, especialy for the studie of physic and anatomie,' which, he tells us, were 'fairly built in quadrangle, with cloysters beneath, and above with columns.' The inscription over the great gate was characteristic of an age of high thinking and lofty ideals:

*Sic ingredere ut teipso quotidie doctior; sic  
egredere ut indies Patriae Christianaeq; Re-  
publicae utilior evadas; ita demum Gymnasium  
a te feliciter ornatum existimabit.*

The student society was as vicious and unbridled as such societies have always tended to be, a fact to which Evelyn bears ample witness; but of all this Ferrar naturally kept himself clear, going his own way, studying hard and winning the esteem of the professors, while missing no opportunity of giving practical expression to his Christianity, as in the case of Edward Garton, who is the person referred to in the following:

'While Mr. Ferrar continued thus at Padua, to establish his health, and pursue his studies, he had an opportunity of exercising his great faculty in quieting a troubled mind. For now an English gentleman came thither, who by the impious custom of duelling had killed another, and had fled from his country to avoid the

punishment which the laws adjudge to murderers. He was under the deepest melancholy, but concealed the cause of his uneasiness. At length, however, he acquainted Mr. Ferrar with his misfortune, declaring his great contrition, and sincere repentance; and beseeching him to give counsel and comfort. Mr. Ferrar by his spiritual consolations, his persuasive arguments, and wonderful power over the human mind, at length made the unhappy sufferer more easy and composed, and confirmed him in the hope of forgiveness. And this event laid the foundation of a sincere and most affectionate friendship between them.'

His society was much sought after by men of all sorts, who fell readily under his charm, although they were utterly unable to conform to his standards of high living; 'they would often ingenuously confess,' says the biographer, 'that he was certainly in the right way, and that they could not but wish they could live as he lived.'

There can be no question, however, that for a man who had suffered from 'aguish distempers' the marshy country of Padua and Venice was not the right climate in which to regain strength for a constitution already sorely tried, and the modern reader feels no surprise at learning that at Padua his old enemy found him out and that he fell dangerously ill. His friends the physicians did their utmost for him, and his own medical skill stood him in good stead. Professional opinion, in opposition to his own, ran strongly in the direc-

tion of bleeding him, but one very old doctor enunciated the modern view that he was his own best physician, and persuaded his colleagues to defer the bleeding. Favourable symptoms began to appear very shortly, and soon he was well on the road to recovery, though with the cheerful assurance from these good friends that he could not possibly be long-lived, although by careful dieting he might expect to prolong his days a little more than would otherwise be the case. 'And so,' says the biographer, 'it proved, though his labours and watchings were far greater as he drew nearer heaven.'

Barnabas Oley, in his life of George Herbert, places at this time a determined attempt of some Roman Catholic friends to win Ferrar over to their communion.

'I have seen in manuscript of Mr. Ferrar's, and heard by relation of his travels over the western parts of Christendom; in which his exquisite carriage, his rare parts and abilities of understanding and languages, his morals more perfect than the best, did tempt the adversaries to tempt him, and mark him for a prize, if they could compass him. And opportunity they had to do this, in a sickness that seized on him at Padua, where mighty care was had by physicians and others to recover his bodily health, with design to infect his soul. But neither did their physic nor poison work any change in his religion, but rather inflamed him with a holy zeal to revenge their charity, by transplanting their waste and

misplaced zeal (as they were all three admirable in separating from the vile what was precious in every sect or person under heaven) to adorn our Protestant religion, by a right renouncing of the world with all its profits and honours, in a true crucifying the flesh, with all its pleasures, by continued temperance, fasting, and watching unto prayer. In all which exercises, as he far outwent the choicest of their retired men, so did he far undervalue these deeds, rating them much below such prices as they set upon them.'

Peckard throws some doubt upon the truth of the foregoing, but without giving reasons. It is very certain that what he saw of community life upon the Continent, and especially in Italy, must have impressed him with a sense of the loss to the Church in England involved in its wholesale abandonment. At Padua he would have had opportunities of observing that life in its genuine form in the congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, which must have appealed to one of his naturally ascetic temperament. A contemporary account of this community suggests no small affinity between its rule and that subsequently practised in Little Gidding. That he was a keen student of the devotional works of Roman Catholic writers we have ample evidence, as his translations of Valdesso and Lessius in after-life bear witness. And we know, too, how strongly Roman Catholics, clerical and lay, were impressed by the practical working of his rule at the Little

Gidding establishment. The surprising thing would have been if the agents of the Roman Church had not tried to win over one who discerned so clearly the merits as well as the weak points of their communion.

Be that as it may, Ferrar pursued his old plan of thoroughly studying the country as well as applying himself to particular subjects. 'Having traversed all Italy,' says Peckard, 'and become intimately acquainted with every place of consequence, being perfect master of the Italian language, both for writing and discourse, having an accurate knowledge of all their laws, customs, manners, doctrines, and practices, civil and ecclesiastic, and having made the best use of every thing he had heard, read, or seen,' he began to think of visiting Rome—a hazardous project in those days, when Anglicans and Englishmen were regarded with suspicion and hostility at the headquarters of the Roman Church, and ran a fair risk of being treated as spies in the pay of Rome by their own people. Of only one of the earlier expeditions have we any record.

'In one of these he went to see the chapel of Loretto. From thence he went to Malta, where one of the knights conceiving a particular friendship for him, at their parting desired his acceptance of one of the rich crosses worn by the brethren of that order, entreating him to keep it for his sake; and thus exchanging mutual good wishes and benedictions, Mr. Ferrar returned again to Venice.'

He timed his visit to Rome so as to arrive in the Monday of Holy Week, and considering all that he had certainly done before this visit, it is impossible to fix it earlier than 1616, in spite of Professor Mayor's note placing it a year previously. This assertion is probably deduced from the date given by Peckard for Ferrar's subsequent letter from Venice to his friends at home, but Peckard is not invariably accurate—sometimes, indeed, he is quite the reverse—and that date cannot be reconciled even with his own account of the *wanderjähre*. And Professor Mayor's view must be rejected for another and more cogent reason, namely, that at so early a date Ferrar could not by any possibility have acquired the knowledge of the Italian tongue necessary to pass without attracting attention in the Roman capital. Of his visit thither Peckard gives the following account:

Having been well informed that since he came into Italy, there had been a particular account of him sent to Rome, of the college of which he was a fellow in Cambridge, of his degrees, and his acquisitions in learning, and particularly that his person had been described at all points to the college of Jesuits there; the manner also in which he spent his time in Italy, with the general conjecture, that he surely had some farther end in travelling than other gentlemen ordinarily have: all this duly considered made him keep his intention very private. Changing his habit therefore for such a dress as he thought most proper for his dis-

guise, and safety, he set forward, concealing the time when, and keeping the place from whence he came always unknown to all but one trusty friend only, the unfortunate Mr. Garton], who, whatever should befall him in that journey, might give an account of him to his family. He travelled on foot, and contrived his business so that he came to Rome on the Monday before Easter; and during his stay there, he every day changed his lodgings, coming in late and going out early: and as to his repast, such as it was, he took that also sometimes at one place, sometimes at another, and sometimes at none at all. He staid at Rome ten days, and in that time he so improved his opportunities as that he satisfied himself in seeing all that he desired.'

Once he nearly got into trouble for neglecting to kneel as the Pope passed him in procession, but a Swiss Guard thrust him down with kindly violence, and so he escaped. Let it be noticed that this *faux pas* was due solely to inadvertence, 'he was too genteel a traveller,' as Jebb observes, to fail in the practice of ordinary courtesy to a Christian prelate in his own palace.

From Rome he returned safely to Venice, and thence, having decided to leave Italy, he made overland for Marseilles, 'purposing after he had passed sufficient time in that city, for visiting what was remarkable there and in the parts adjacent, to take ship there and sail from thence to Spain.' But there he was again prostrated by 'a more terrible fever than that which seized him

before at Padua,' and he was in serious danger of his life.

'The first day he was taken ill he wrote to his much-loved friend whom he had left at Venice, the unfortunate Mr. G[arton], to whom he had promised to give information of his arrival at Marseilles. In this letter he acquainted him that he was beginning to grow ill, and feared his illness would prove both long and dangerous. Nor was he mistaken, for his illness continued thirty-four days, and his physician was for a long time in absolute despair of his life. His disorder still continuing excessive, the physician had given him up for lost. But at the very moment when all hope was gone, a favourable crisis took place; and though he was extremely weak, and reduced to the lowest degree, yet he soon appeared to be in a fair way of recovery.'

At this point his friend Garton arrived from Venice, and his companionship did much to aid Ferrar's recovery. When he decided to return to Venice Ferrar insisted upon accompanying him, and, so says Peckard, 'from this place Mr. Ferrar immediately gave his parents an account of his cruel sickness and recovery at Marseilles, in a very affectionate letter bearing date April 1616.' However the error came about, it seems almost certain that this letter was written in 1617. Perhaps the error was due to the fact that the new year reckoned by the Old Style had only just begun, and Ferrar indorsed the year wrongly

from force of habit. The original has vanished, and the point will never, probably, be cleared up.

Apparently he did not remain long at Venice, though he did so, according to Peckard, 'till he was perfectly recovered and his health thoroughly recruited.' According to Jebb, Ferrar had not returned to Venice, but sailed direct to Spain from Marseilles, Garton having stayed with him 'until a perfect recovery was established,' and this again creates a puzzling discrepancy, for if Jebb is right, the letter of 'April 1616' was never written at all. Peckard, however, probably had the original letter before him, and his version may be so far accepted. However that may be, Ferrar set sail in a small English vessel (according to Peckard from Venice) bound for Spain, and then, according to both versions of the biography, adventures befell him.

'The ship in which Mr. Ferrar left Venice, carried only ten pieces of ordnance, but was overloaded, though there were no passengers but himself. They had not been long at sea, before a large ship, a Turkish pirate, gave them chase, and gained speedily upon them. And there being some difference of opinion between the officers, and mariners, whether they ought to yield, or fight it out; they referred their doubts to Mr. Ferrar, who had stood silent among them attending to their debate. They said, "This young gentleman has a life to lose, as well as we; let us hear what he thinks of the

matter." For from his first coming on board, upon discourse with him, they had taken a great liking to him, perceiving that he had great skill in maritime affairs. Mr. Ferrar being thus applied to in form for his opinion, resolutely told them that they ought to fight it out, and put their trust in God. That it was better to die valiantly, than be carried into slavery. That God could easily deliver them, and he hoped would not suffer them to fall into the hands of the enemy. He then put them in mind of the many sea engagements achieved by their countrymen, in which the victory had been gained against superior numbers. Thus encouraged, his words were so prevalent, that with all speed they made ready to defend themselves, committing their cause to the protection of God. And to show that they were not deficient in English spirit, they, having the advantage of the wind, and a fit opportunity, determined to give their enemy a broadside: when, lo! just as the master was giving the word to the gunner to fire, the Turkish ship to their great astonishment fell off, and steered away from them with all the sail she could make. They soon perceived that this unexpected movement was from the discovery of another ship, which they supposed, was thought to be a better booty. The Turk being gone they proceeded on their voyage.'

Spain was reached without further incident, but at what port Ferrar disembarked does not appear, and his movements and motives during this time

are somewhat obscure. He seems to have thought that he was in some danger, perhaps from the Inquisition, as in Rome, for he preserved throughout a strict incognito, even from his friends, and we hear little of the inquiries and studies in which he delighted to occupy himself elsewhere. He reached Madrid, too, before his time, and in consequence the remittances that he was expecting from home had not arrived. Staying some time at Madrid he exhausted the money that he had brought with him, but refused to accept the loans which were pressed upon him by the English merchants of the place, and especially by young Mr. Wyche, the son of his father's old friend, all of whom recognised in him a man of mark and distinction. His original intention was, no doubt, to make as thorough study of Spain as he had done of other countries, and then to travel home through France; but, says Jebb, 'he received an information, or rather intimation, by a strange way, that his family were involved in sad distresses, and that none but he by his return could extricate them and preserve them from ruin.' Accordingly he determined to make for England at once, travelling on foot to the port of St. Sebastian, and thence taking ship home. It was a daring thing to undertake alone, in the heat of summer, a land journey of five hundred miles in an unsettled country; and a severe test of mental and physical endurance for one who had never wanted for money in his life, who was more of the student than the adventurer, and whose health was far from strong. But, selling his cloak and

some jewels in order to raise some ready money, he accomplished the feat successfully.

‘With the rich rapier in his hand presented to him by his dear friend Mr. Garton, without a cloak, in his doublet and cassock, and with many a weary step, and very few accommodations, he pursued his journey.’ He suffered from blistered feet, which yielded to a homely remedy prescribed by the hostess of one of the inns at which he halted. At one large town he was summoned before the governor, who wished to despoil him of his rapier, and only desisted at the bold front shown by Ferrar, who posed as a young Italian bound for the army under Spinola in Flanders. In a wild cavern which did duty for a hostelry in the mountains he only escaped by his coolness from being drawn into a tavern brawl and murdered. One way and another, however, by constant readiness and presence of mind, he evaded these and other perils that beset him, and arrived safe at St. Sebastian. There he was detained for a long time, waiting for a fair wind, and again his evident abilities and distinction prompted the hospitable English community to place their purses at his service. In the end he accepted a loan of ten pounds, knowing ‘there was sometimes as much good-nature in receiving handsomely as in doing a courtesy.’ At length the winds were favourable, and he set sail for home, landing at Dover in a few days after a prosperous voyage. ‘Leaping on shore he fell flat on his face on his mother-earth, and rendered most humble thanks to God for so many preservations abroad, and for

bringing him home safe and sound to his native country.' Thence making all speed to London, he entered his father's house, unrecognised in his Spanish garb, and falling on his knees before the old man, asked for his blessing. Thus appropriately ended Nicholas Ferrar's *wanderjähre*.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE VIRGINIA COMPANY

(1618—1624)

'That rivers flow into the sea  
Is loss and waste, the foolish say,  
Nor know that back they find their way,  
Unseen, to where they wont to be.'

THE mention of Nicholas Ferrar calls up fragrant memories of Little Gidding and a saintly personality, but the close connection of himself and his family with the distinguished secular activities that clustered round the founding of the colony of Virginia, and the gallant, if ineffectual, struggle with the Crown for the maintenance of the Virginia Company, are not so familiar. It is well to realise that Nicholas Ferrar and his brother added yet this to their other titles to fame, that they were excellent men of business, that the leading statesmen of his day welcomed Nicholas Ferrar to their inner counsels and valued his advice, and that nothing but his own humility prevented him from taking an even more prominent part in the politics of that stormy age. The records of the last years of the Virginia Company, copied in all probability by the provident direc-

Unquenched Love in him appear'd to bee,  
when for his murtherous foes hee did entreat:  
A peering eie made bright by Faith had hee,  
For hee could see in thy glory soe.  
And soe vnmind his Patience he did keepe,  
Hee did as if he had but fallen asleepe.

Our Luke-waeme Seats w<sup>th</sup> his Ew<sup>t</sup> Zeale inflame:  
So constant & soe loving let vs bee.  
So let vs living glorify thy Name:  
So let vs dying fix our eies on thee.  
And when y sleepes of Death shall vs overtake,  
With him to Life eternall us awake.

This Hymne is one of Mr. Wi.  
Sanne of the Church

THE HANDWRITING OF NICHOLAS FERRAR

From a *Conversation Book* of Little Gidding



tion of Nicholas Ferrar, and supposed by Peckard and others to have been lost, are now in Library of Congress at Washington, and copies of portions of them are to be seen in the Massachusetts Historical Collections and of the whole in Miss Kingsbury's splendid transcript. That they are of the deepest interest, and throw considerable light upon an important phase of Ferrar's character and activities goes without saying.

Old Nicholas Ferrar, as we have seen, had been interested in 'plantations' for many years, chiefly, as it would seem, with a view to the spread of Christianity in the New World. The plantation of Virginia and the Somers Islands (now the Bermudas) was, in his view—

'a project for the common good, for the employment of unsettled people, for estates to younger brothers, for a supply of those commodities which we were fain to fetch from other countries at intolerable rates, and, above all, for the conversion of the rude and miserable savages there to the Christian faith.'

Another early supporter of the plantations was William Crashaw, a clergyman, the father of the poet, who was nearly related to the Crashaw who figures in Smith's *Virginia* as a dashing fighter and leader of the colonists. William Crashaw preached a fiery sermon at the Temple on February 21, 1609-10, before Lord De la Warr, on the departure of his expedition, in words which the hearers must have found it difficult to forget:

‘Remember that thou art a general of English men, nay, a general of Christian men; therefore principally look to religion. You go to commend it to the Heathen, then practise it yourselves; make the name of Christ honourable, not hateful unto them.’

In 1618 Nicholas Ferrar and his sons appear in the list of adventurers as the holders of substantial shares, and in the same year he sent out his son William, a barrister, to settle in Virginia. This William became a Member of Council and Commissioner of Charles and Henrico counties, and his descendants are living still. The Treasurer, or principal official, of the Company in that year was Sir Thomas Smyth, whose corruption and inefficiency had dragged down its fortunes to a low ebb, while the high-handed action of his relative, Samuel Argall, the Governor, had wellnigh precipitated a crisis in the colony itself. The adventurers insisted that something must be done, and the imperative necessity for improved management was emphasised by the growth of a Spanish party at Court, which treated the infant colony as a possible rival to the older settlements of Spain in the New World, to be crushed at all costs. Matters came to a head in April 1619, when Sir Thomas Smyth and his party were ousted from office, and Sir Edwin Sandys became Treasurer, with John Ferrar, the elder of the brothers, as his Deputy. Henceforward the meetings, or courts, of the Company were held at the great Ferrar mansion in St. Sythe’s Lane, where ‘Mr. Ferrar,

the father, from his singular affection for that Honourable Company, himself being one of the first adventurers on that plantation, and the Somers Islands, allowed them the use of his great hall, and other best rooms of his house, to hold their weekly and daily meetings.' The new officers speedily put matters on a more business-like footing, and kept regular records of their proceedings, in which nobody who is familiar with the literary style of John Ferrar and his brother can fail at every turn to recognise their handi-work.

Nicholas Ferrar, the younger, reached home, as we have seen, towards the end of 1618, having been suddenly recalled by family troubles, in which this matter of Virginia probably figured largely. His first intention was to return to Cambridge and resume his Physic Fellowship at Clare Hall, but of this his parents would not hear, and he yielded to their desires. Probably he threw himself into the plantation business at once, for in this year we find his name, along with his father's and brother's, in the list of the adventurers in the Somers Islands. His reputation as a scholar and man of letters already stood high, and we may so far anticipate as to note here that in 1619, according to Peck (but more probably in 1620 when the office fell vacant), he was offered the Readership in Geometry at Gresham College, in succession to the celebrated Henry Briggs, one of the discoverers of logarithms. The offer was made in flattering terms, and at the instance of Briggs himself, but Nicholas refused it modestly.

His good friend Mr. Briggs, he said, was much mistaken in him; 'his affection and goodness towards him had misled his judgment.' Also 'he had indeed some other good ends, if God thought fit to bring them to pass.' Everything, however, urged him to take his part in the affairs of the Virginia, and the heads of the enterprise were not slow to call him into their counsels.

'Soon after Mr. Ferrar's return, Sir Edwin Sandys, who had heard a high character of him from many who had known him in Italy, sought his acquaintance; and being exceedingly taken with his great abilities, took the first opportunity to make him known to the Earl of Southampton, and the other principal members of the Virginia Company. In a very little time he was made one of a particular committee in some business of great importance; whereby the Company having sufficient proof of his extraordinary abilities, at the next general court it was proposed and agreed that he should be king's counsel for the Virginia plantation in the place of his brother John, who was then made the deputy governor.'

His actual influence behind the scenes was soon very great. Old Mr. Ferrar 'was much joyed to see his son as heartily affording his assistance to Sir Edwin as he intreated it in this hard work.' He was introduced to the numerous group of distinguished men who controlled the fortunes of the Company, of whom Henry Wriothesley, the Earl

of Southampton, once the friend of Shakespeare, was the chief.

‘Mr. Nicholas Ferrar, the younger, was sure to be named for one in all committees; he was become their secretary to all intents and purposes. Their letters of advice to the Colony were drawn by him; he had the framing and ordering of all instructions, either for matter of government or for the country’s improvement by staple commodities. He treated with the civilians, the common lawyers, and the divines that came to their courts; he managed the victualling and setting out of their ships. He alone, as the tradesmen and seamen acknowledged, could direct all the officers.’

His versatility had always been extraordinary, and he was now able to utilise it to better purpose than ever. Thus, it is not surprising to find him thanked, along with his brother John, in the Treasurer’s first Annual Review, delivered in the spring of 1620, when we read:

‘He could not but very greatly commend Mr. Deputy for his fidelity, care, and industry, who, neglecting his private business, had employed his whole time, together with the great help and assistance of his brethren, in performing so well his charge, full of incredible trouble.’

A few weeks later there appeared an admirable apology for the Company, put forth with a view

to encountering the slanders disseminated by 'the Spanniolising faction' and the malcontents, led by the ex-Treasurer, Sir Thomas Smyth, entitled, *A Declaration of the State of the Colonie and Affaires in Virginia*, issued by 'His Majesties Counseil for Virginia,' which bears every mark of being the handiwork of Nicholas Ferrar. It is a crisp and business-like array of facts, marshalled with a keen eye to their relative importance and cumulative effect—the work of a ready and practised writer and clear thinker, of one who knew the world, and could take broad and far-sighted views of the great problems of statesmanship. And Nicholas Ferrar was then just twenty-seven years of age.

This year (1620) was one of difficulty. The administration of Sandys had gone far to rehabilitate the fortunes of the Company, and for the better working of the Colony he, with the avowed assistance of Nicholas Ferrar, had drafted a constitution, under which the first representative assembly convened in America met on July 30, 1619—an anniversary to be much observed of all good Americans. But defalcations to the extent of £3000 had been found in the accounts of Sir Thomas Smyth, who, with his friends, was therefore active in trying to discredit Sandys's administration; and the Spanish faction had so effectually poisoned the mind of the King that he took the serious step—in direct contravention of the Company's patent—of prohibiting the re-election of Sandys to the Treasurership at the expiry of his first year of office, and of desiring the Court to

elect one of three nominees of his own. This led to something of a scene, but after two months' delay the matter was compromised by the unanimous choice of the Earl of Southampton, who had not figured on the King's list, as Treasurer, and the re-election of John Ferrar as his Deputy. Thus, as Southampton left the bulk of the business to Sandys, matters went on much as before. Lastly, old Mr. Ferrar died in the month of April, leaving a liberal bequest to the Colony for the Christian education of 'young infidels,' and appointing his son Nicholas his sole executor. The Proceedings record that 'Mr. Nicholas Ferrar, the elder, was translated from this life into a better' —an expression which would read oddly in the minutes of a joint-stock company of our more enlightened day. The triumvirate directing the affairs of the Company at this time is described by a contemporary as 'Lord Southampton, celebrated for wisdom, eloquence, and sweet deportment; Sir Edwin Sandys for great knowledge and integrity; and Nicholas Ferrar for wonderful abilities, unwearied diligence, and the strictest virtue.' The omission from this list of Sir John Danvers, who was then and afterwards conspicuous in the inner councils of the Company, is singular; but this point will be touched upon later. The King, however, was persuaded that 'the Virginia Court was but the seminary to a seditious Parliament,' while Sandys he declared to be his 'greatest enemy,' protesting that 'he could hardly think well of whomsoever was his friend.' 'Choose the devil if you will, but not Sir Edwin Sandys!' he

said, when the question of Sandys's re-election was being debated. Thus prospects continued to give good cause for anxiety.

At the Easter Court of 1621 John Ferrar was again elected Deputy at the instance of the Earl of Southampton — 'it was his suit to the Company that Mr. John Ferrar, of whose fidelity and sufficiency they had already so good experience, might still continue his place as Deputy, which, with a general consent, was very willingly condescended to.' During the months that followed the handiwork of the Ferrars is constantly discernible in the Proceedings of the Company. On June 13, 1621, for instance, we read:

'Intelligence being given that a Gentleman refusing to be named had written a treatise for the good of the Plantation, which consisted of these five general heads, namely: Sustenance, Health, Defence, Commerce, and Censure, in handling of which, he had, with great judgment, observed the causes of the defects in every one of them in the Colony, and proposed several ways how to remedy the same—the Court gave orders that the Company's thanks should be given unto the said Gentleman, with earnest request that he would proceed to the finishing thereof, and that after it had been perused by a select Committee, it should be put in print.'

This is so exactly upon the lines of study marked out for himself by Nicholas Ferrar during his recent travels on the Continent that there need

be little hesitation in attributing the treatise to him, especially as neither he nor his brother were named to serve upon the Committee which was to report upon it. What became of it ultimately, however, does not appear. Perhaps, in the crush of other duties that thronged upon him, it was dropped and never resumed. Nicholas Ferrar was also appointed in July to be treasurer of a party of adventurers who took out a patent for a glass factory in Virginia for seven years. 'Mr. Deputy' (John Ferrar) figures prominently in the interminable dispute between the King and the Company regarding the tobacco traffic. A dispatch from the Council in June complained:

'How extreamly displeasing it was to the King, and scandalous vnto the Plantation and vnto the whole Company, that notwithstanding it had been prosecuted these many years by many wise and worthie persons, and wasted in that time a Masse of money, yett hath it not produced any other effects than that smokie weed of Tobacco.'

The 'Most Humble Answer' in reply to this was drafted and submitted to the Council by John Ferrar in person in the following October, and contains passages and phrases which are strongly reminiscent of his subsequent writings. His speech, too, had the true Ferrar ring; and, though the 'Answer' was termed undutiful, and there was a stormy scene over it at the Council, he emerged from it with strengthened credit and enhanced

reputation, in which, no doubt, Nicholas, his fellow-worker, had his share. The frequent absences of Lord Southampton from the meetings of the Company brought the Deputy, John Ferrar, into increasing prominence, and under him the prosaic but eminently useful work of daily and detailed administration was carried on quietly and regularly, despite the gathering storm that threatened from the Spanish party at Court and their puppet, the King.

At the Easter Court of 1622 John Ferrar had, under the rules of the Company, to vacate his post, and the King again interfered to suggest certain persons from whom the new Treasurer and Deputy should be elected, while formally deprecating any desire to interfere with the Company's freedom of election. Again a scene followed, and the matter was settled by the re-election of Southampton as Treasurer and the choice, by an overwhelming majority, of Nicholas Ferrar as Deputy—neither of whom were named in the royal list. Nicholas Ferrar's election was at the express instance of Lord Southampton, who observed:

‘That he was the only man who was able to go through with the business; and to encounter all those great and potent oppositions which he knew either were, or very soon would be, raised against the Company and the Plantation: and that without Mr. Ferrar's alliance all would fall to ruin.’

Nicholas returned thanks to the Court in a modest

and characteristic speech, in which he appealed to his brother to continue to assist the Company with his help and counsel, and this John promised to do. One would like to quote at length from the Proceedings at this point, but inexorable space forbids.

Troubles came thick and fast. Nicholas Ferrar could hardly have assumed office before the news arrived of the terrible massacre of the colonists in and about Jamestown, by the Indians, which took place on March 22, 1621-2. In this catastrophe there perished some 347 of the colonists, and the survivors, terrified and disheartened, were on the point of abandoning the whole adventure. In the difficult work of restoring confidence and the myriad details involved in reorganising the Colony Nicholas bore the foremost part, and to this the Proceedings bear full and unquestionable testimony. In June the King ordered the arrest of Southampton and Sandys, so that the whole direction of affairs fell upon Nicholas Ferrar. (Woodnoth, however, has it that Sir John Danvers took command; a number of the adventurers 'went with Mr. Nicholas Farrar home to his house, imploring his assistance,' though the fullest credit is also given to the 'two Farrar brothers,' and their 'discretion and affection.') After the release and during the incarceration of the leaders strong efforts were made by the Court party to detach Ferrar by offering him important posts under the Crown as the price of persuading the Company to yield up their charter to the King, which, of course, he refused. In 1623, on the Thursday before Easter

(according to Peckard), the Council required an immediate answer to certain questions regarding the working of the Company, to be delivered by the following Monday afternoon, and Nicholas Farrar again came to the front. The story may be told in the words of his cousin, Arthur Woodnoth, the friend of George Herbert, taken from a pamphlet written very soon after the suppression of the Company, mainly in vindication of Sir John Danvers:

‘These *quaeres* sent on the Saturday were to be satisfied by the Tuesday following, at sitting of the Council in the afternoon. The Lord Cavendish, Sir Edwin Sandys, Sir John Danvers, and Mr. Nicholas Farrar meeting by appointment of the Company, with power to consider and present what they should find pertinent therein, found a hard task to answer so many particulars in so short a time. Yet finding the truths couched or exemplified in the Leiger Books of the Company would satisfie the *quaeres* and objections thereupon, Mr. Farrar desired the business and search might be divided into four parts, wherein he would take that of greatest labour: which was concluded by the other three, and accordingly brought together the Tuesday morning, and presented to the Councell Bord in the afternoon, and gave the Lords a most unexpected satisfaction, as was confessed.’

It is interesting to compare the foregoing with Peckard’s account:

'By the shortness of the time allowed (which was preconcerted with the lord treasurer) it was thought impossible that the agents for the Company should give in any answer. . . . Mr. Ferrar however dividing the charge into three parts, giving one to lord Cavendish, another to Sir Edwin Sandys, and taking the third to himself, and employing six clerks very ready with the pen to copy fair, continuing at the work without interruption, night and day, allowing but two hours for sleep, and refreshment, did actually produce and lay before the Council a complete answer at the time appointed. . . . A clerk was ordered to read the answer. The reading took up full six hours. When it was done, all was a considerable time deep silence and astonishment. The adversaries of the Company were all perplexed and confounded, and in shame retired home. They had however sufficient presence of mind to secrete and convey away the answer they had required. It never appeared more, and the Company never heard what became of it.'

The omission of all reference to Sir John Danvers by Peckard, as well as by the other biographers, is again to be noted. Woodnoth's account was written within a year or two of the events narrated; and John Ferrar's, upon which Peckard founded his memoir, not until 1655 and after Woodnoth's death, so that Woodnoth's version is *prima facie* more likely to be the correct one.

This proceeding of the Council was followed on

May 9 by the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry into the work of the Company, the Court books and other records having already been called in on April 21. On May 13 Lord Cavan-dish, Sir Edwin Sandys, and John and Nicholas Ferrar were put under arrest in their own houses for alleged contempt of an order of Council, and the Ferrars were only released upon a strongly worded protest from the Company that 'through the two Deputies restrainte Mr. John Ferrar and Mr. Nicholas Ferrar ther was a great interruption in preparinge of the business of the Company for the Commissioners.' This was on May 21. The Company was not permitted counsel at the inquiry, and the defence was, therefore, entrusted to Nicholas Ferrar. In this difficult business he won golden opinions for his sagacity and readiness in reply; for some weeks he had to appear twice a week at the Council Board, and his popularity was such that the Lords of the Council deemed it necessary to forbid him to come 'with more than twelve attendance.' But the suppression of the Company by fair means or foul was determined on, and on November 15 a writ of *Quo Warranto* issued in the Court of the King's Bench, by way of a formal challenge at law. The Company immediately protested that they could not prepare their defence without their records and applied to have them returned, and this was done on November 21. It had by this time become abundantly clear to Nicholas Ferrar that the records might at any moment be impounded and tampered with by the adversary, and accordingly

he arranged to have the Court books of the period covered by the administration of himself and his friends carefully transcribed. Four copyists were employed, one of whom was his nephew Thomas Collett, and each page was checked and certified by the secretary to the Company, Edward Collingwood, while there is evidence of his own share in the business in constant notes and corrections in his easily-recognisable handwriting and that of his brother John. The last page was certified on June 19, 1624, and five days later the originals were seized by the Court party, never to be heard of again, thus amply vindicating the sagacity of Nicholas Ferrar's action. It is interesting to know that these copies, after having been presented to the Earl of Southampton (who observed that as evidences of his honour he valued them more than the evidence of his lands), passed through an ascertained chain of individuals to the Library of Congress at Washington, where they now lie. They have recently been reprinted in two monumental volumes under the admirable editorship of Miss S. M. Kingsbury, at the expense of the United States Government.

Here again, however, we encounter a strange contradiction in Woodnoth's assertion that this transcript was made at the instance of Sir John Danvers, while the speech which, according to Ferrar's biographers, was made to Ferrar by the Earl of Southampton is quoted by Woodnoth as having been made to Danvers. Miss Kingsbury gives conclusive reasons for accepting Peckard's account that the work was put through by Ferrar

at an expense of £50 to himself: but the difficulty remains that Woodnoth was writing very soon after the events which he records, and had good opportunities of knowing, besides being a man of unimpeachable integrity. The only answer to this is that Peckard probably wrote from John Ferrar's notes, and that John Ferrar was directly concerned in the matter and was therefore as good a witness as Woodnoth, who also adds:

‘These instances with others of like nature, too large to be remembered here, confirm the observation of those two worthy gentlemen, Mr. *John* and *Nicholas Farrars*, the one a merchant of known honesty, and the other eminent in all kinds of learning, and true piety (who with their most virtuous Mother deserve an honourable memory for their deserts, by laying out a good part of their plentifull fortune in piously advancing the undertaking of the *Virginia* and *Bermudas* Plantation).’

On July 15, 1624, the Charter of the Company was formally pronounced void, and ‘it pleased his royall Majesty to suppress the course of the Court at Deputy Farrars’ and transfer it to the house of their old enemy, Sir Thomas Smyth, in Philpot Lane, whence, as far as can be made out, that worthy and his friends covered up their tracks by making away with all that might incriminate themselves in the records of the Company. The Ferrars had appeared as defendants, and were forced to bear the legal expenses of the suit so

far as it affected them, whereby they were heavy losers. Meanwhile the political pendulum had swung violently in the other direction, owing to the abandonment of the Spanish match, and Sandys and Nicholas Ferrar, and a hundred old members of the Company were sent to the Parliament which was summoned in the February of 1623-4, to try to rescue the Company from destruction, or get it resuscitated. Ferrar represented Lymington, and bore a conspicuous part in the work of the House. So far as the Company went their efforts were fruitless, but they had the satisfaction of impeaching its most unscrupulous opponent, the Lord Treasurer Cranfield, by this time Earl of Middlesex, who had been shameless in his efforts to corrupt and browbeat Ferrar from his allegiance; and the impeachment, introduced in a brilliant speech by Nicholas Ferrar, resulted in the ruin and rout of Cranfield and his disappearance from the public life which he had disgraced. In after years Ferrar's sensitive conscience was wont to reproach him with his share in this business, but, as it seems, without good cause. That the work of the Ferrars for Virginia was more justly rated later on is shown by the appointment of the brothers to the Commission of Virginia which sat from 1631 to 1634. The character of Nicholas Ferrar as a public man has been worthily summed up by the American historian, Bancroft, in words upon which it would be hard to improve:

‘Nicholas Ferrar was one of the least selfish

men that ever lived . . . the conduct of business gradually fell into the hands of the latter [Nicholas Ferrar], who proved himself able and indefatigable in business, devoted to his country and its Church, at once a Royalist and a wise and firm upholder of English liberties. . . . English character nowhere showed itself to better advantage than in the Virginia Company after the change in its direction.'

## CHAPTER IV

LITTLE GIDDING  
(1624—1626)

‘Give me the pliant minde, whose gentle measure  
Complies and suits with all estates;  
Which can let loose a crown, and yet with pleasure  
Take up within a cloister’s gates.’

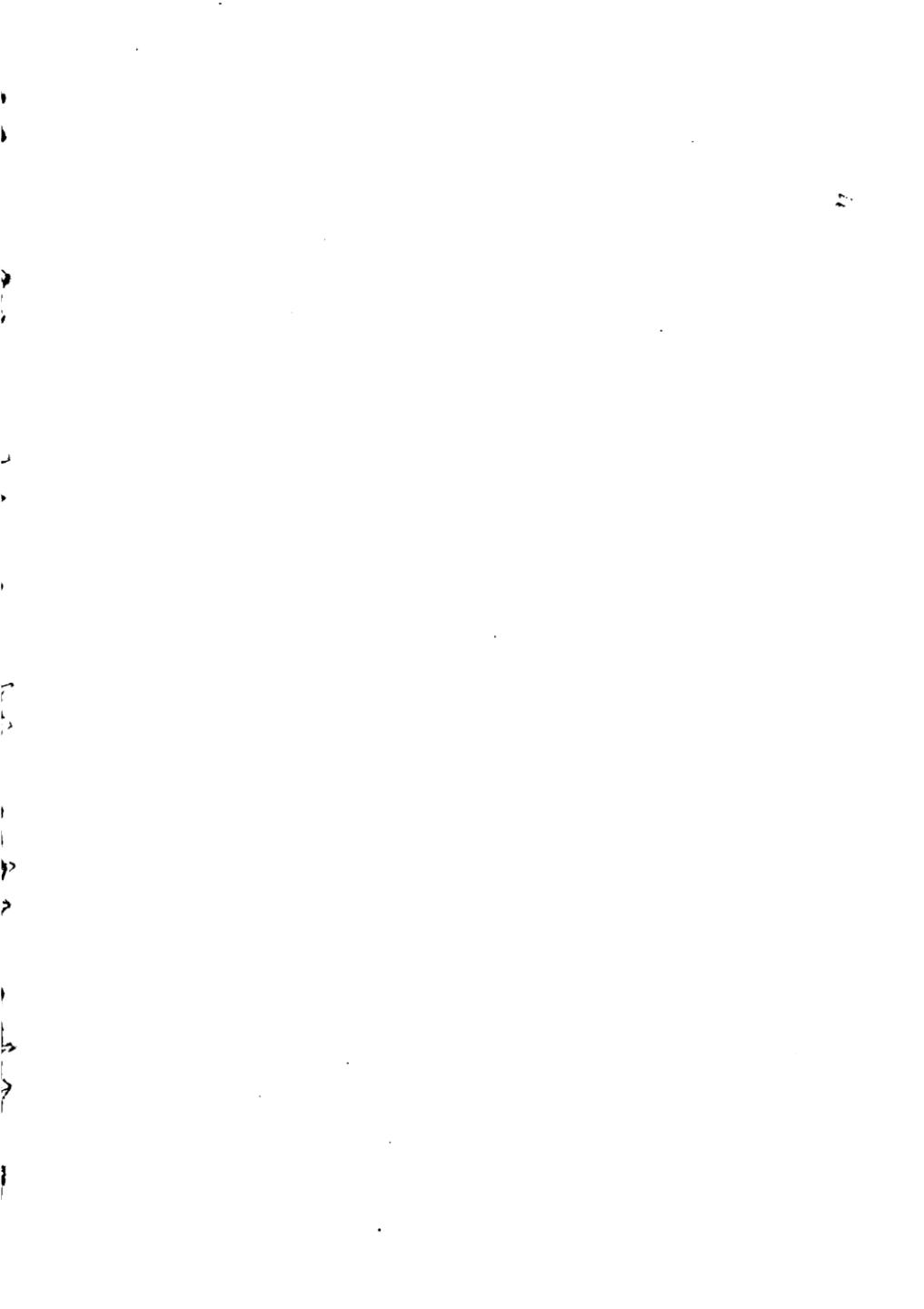
AT the age of thirty-one, then, we find Nicholas Ferrar with an established reputation as a brilliant man of affairs, and with the world practically at his feet. True, the Virginia Company had been swept away, and his own fortune and the fortunes of his friends had suffered cruelly in the catastrophe—indeed, it was only during his last year of office that he had received any salary; his previous services, arduous as they were, had been rendered without hope of reward, and his own private interests had been neglected meanwhile with disastrous results. But he was a marked man; his determined opposition to the Crown had evoked unwilling compliments from his adversaries and even from the King himself; he had been offered positions of trust and emolument under the Government at home and abroad, and he had been paid the high honour of the unsolicited offer of

the Gresham Readership of Geometry in succession to, and at the instance of, one of the foremost mathematicians of the age. Public men vied with each other to enlist on their side the rising member of parliament who had successfully dared and encountered, and had ended by humbling to the dust, so powerful and dangerous a foe as the Lord Treasurer. He was given the opportunity of repairing his fortunes at a stroke by a marriage with the comely and attractive daughter of a wealthy Virginia merchant, but this, too, he declined with a courtesy which disarmed offence. All these prospects of advancement he deliberately rejected. He set himself to put right the tangled affairs of his brother John and of other friends who had been involved in the downfall of the Virginia Company, and accomplished his task with conspicuous success. There were besides the troublesome and complicated matters connected with the administration of his father's estate, and we learn casually, too, that the crisis which called him home so suddenly from abroad was hardly yet composed. But his creed was emphatically that whatever was worth doing at all was worth doing well, and he worked to such purpose that his family and friends were extricated with dignity, though with inevitable losses, from their difficulties, and his reputation, already very high, was perceptibly increased in the process. But he was ere this evidently determined that his place was no longer in the world of action. To the Virginia merchant who desired him for a son-in-law he had already confided his

intention to remain celibate and to lead a retired life; and there is some reason for supposing, too, that at one time he contemplated going out as a missionary to Virginia. It is certain that his resolution to withdraw from the world had the full approval of his mother and family, and he cast about him accordingly for a suitable spot. The extrication of the family from their difficulties he commemorated in a beautiful prayer of thanksgiving, which was read at Little Gidding in after years upon a set day every month. 'Wonderful indeed,' so it ran, 'hath been Thy goodness towards us: while the wise have been disappointed in their counsels, while the full of friends have been left desolate, while the men whose hands were mighty have found nothing, while the strong on every side have fallen, we, O Lord, have been by Thy power raised up, by Thine arm have we been strengthened, guided by Thy counsels, and relieved by the favour of Thy mercies. And that we might know that it was Thy doing, by those ways and means which we thought not of, Thou hast brought us into a wealthy place, and to the many comforts which we now enjoy.' It is recorded that this practice was maintained until September 1657, and perhaps longer.

Neither the 'great house' in London nor the family mansion in Hertford were suited to his ideas of retirement, 'being too much in view of the public,' but he was not long in hitting upon an ideal spot on the high ground separating Huntingdonshire from Northamptonshire, in the isolated

and all but deserted manor of Little Gidding. 'Nothing was left,' says Peckard, 'but one extremely large mansion-house, going hastily to decay, and a small church within thirty or forty paces of the house, and at that time converted into a barn.' It was an ancient parish, carved out of the parent parish of Great Gidding early in the thirteenth century, when John Engayne, lord of the manor—himself, perhaps, a Knight Templar, made over the advowson to the Knights Templar, who held it until the dissolution of the Order in 1312. After this their property passed to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, whose ownership may be commemorated in the dedication of the church to St. John. The village was then, and for long afterwards, known as Gidding Engayne. After the Dissolution the patronage was exercised by the Crown, and in 1566 one Robert Drewell was lord of the manor: when we next hear of it the Ferrars are in possession. It is a trifle strange that we hear nothing of its rectors during the time of the Ferrar occupation, though one of them at least, David Stevenson (1625-1651) was contemporary with Nicholas Ferrar; and in 1659 Ferrar Collett, and in 1691 Thomas Ferrar, were appointed to the cure. Peckard asserts that the purchase of the manor in Mrs. Ferrar's name was made in 1624, but it is certain that the formalities were not completed until May 30, 1625, when the indentures of sale were signed by Thomas Sheppard, Arthur Woodnoth, and Nicholas Ferrar. Plague was at this time raging in London, and a few days later a case occurred in the next house to





*Photo by*

*Percy J. Slater, Sawtry*

**THE CHURCH AT LITTLE GIDDING**

the Ferrars. Nicholas was still tied to town by business, but on Whitsun-eve, June 4, he prevailed upon his mother and the rest of the family to leave town at once, and sent them off in a coach to Hertford, whence they proceeded in a day or two to Bourne, while John Ferrar went on to Gidding to prepare the place for the reception of his brother Nicholas. The plague was claiming victims to the number of four thousand a week in London, and the family were consequently in great anxiety for Nicholas until the completion of his business set him free to betake himself to Gidding. Thence he wrote to his mother, suggesting that she should allow him a month's quarantine before she joined him at Gidding; but she was impatient to see him, and three days after she floundered on horseback, in spite of her seventy years, through fifteen miles of miry ways to Little Gidding, where, after the patriarchal fashion of the day, her son knelt to receive her blessing.

Her attention was next directed to the church, which certainly required it. 'By the sacrilege and profaneness of the former inhabitants of Gidding the house of God was turned into a hay-barn and a hog-sty.' Mrs. Ferrar insisted, before entering the house, on 'thrusting into the church a little way,' and there 'she kneeled and prayed and wept for about a quarter of an hour.' 'Immediately all the workmen, many in number, employed in the repair of the house, were set to cleanse and repair the church: for she said she would not suffer her eyes to sleep nor her eyelids to slumber till she had purified the temple of the Lord.' In a

month's time, regarding all danger from the plague as past, she summoned her children and grandchildren and other relatives from Bourne 'that they all might live and serve God together at this their new purchase'; and the household, to the number of some forty persons, proceeded to settle themselves and to organise their lives upon the plan worked out by Nicholas Ferrar. This will be described at length later. Here we need only add that in all this exacting labour of repairing the church and domain they 'spun out that part of the unhealthy summer and all the long winter at Gidding.' Plague continued to rage all over the country, and Ferrar obtained permission from his diocesan, John Williams, Bishop of Lincoln, whom he had known intimately in connection with the Virginia Company, to read service daily in the now restored church, together with the Litany, which was used as a special act of supplication for the mitigation of the plague.

About Easter of the following year it was decided to adopt this new way of life permanently, and Mrs. Ferrar and her son went to London (which was now declared free from plague) to wind up their worldly affairs and to take leave of their friends preparatory to a final retirement to Little Gidding. This visit occupied about two months, in the course of which Nicholas Ferrar, after earnest consultation with his old tutor and friend Linsel (afterwards in succession Bishop of Peterborough and Hereford), decided to take Deacon's Orders, so as to be qualified to do duty in the church at Little Gidding. Accordingly he

was introduced by Dr. Linsel to Bishop Laud, who ordained him early on the morning of Trinity Sunday, in Henry VII.'s Chapel, Westminster Abbey. He had informed nobody of his intention, and 'though 'the week before Whitsunday he ate sparingly, fasted much, slept little, and on Whitsun-eve was up all night in his closet, having formerly and frequently done the like, it created nobody's wonder,' so that when he returned home after ordination and made known the fact to his mother, it took the family by surprise. The announcement took the form of a solemn vow, formally recorded on parchment:

'That since God had so often heard his most humble petitions, and delivered him out of many dangers; and in many desperate calamities had extended His mercy to him; he would therefore now give himself up continually to serve God to the utmost of his power, in the office of a deacon, to be the Levite himself in his own house, and to make his own relations, which were many, his cure of souls.'

A large gathering of relations and friends seems to have been present when he read this vow, and they were greatly impressed, as well they might be, at the 'great renunciation' thus publicly made by one to whom the path to fame and fortune lay so obviously and alluringly open. His mother was the first to break the silence of amazement, falling upon his neck with tears, and 'affectionately and devoutly blessing him,' adding for herself, 'I will

also, by the help of my God, set myself with more care and diligence than ever to serve our good Lord God, as is all our duties to do, in all we may.' The others, too, expressed themselves to the same effect. The news of his taking Holy Orders spread quickly, and powerful friends came forward with tempting offers of ecclesiastical preferment.

'These he refused with steadiness and humility, saying that he did not think himself worthy. He added also that his fixed determination was to rise no higher in the Church than the place and office which he now possessed, and which he had undertaken only with the view to be legally authorised to give spiritual assistance, according to his abilities, to his family or others, with whom he might be concerned. That as to temporal affairs, he had now parted with all his worldly estate, and divided it amongst his family.'

Having thus wound up their affairs in London, and bade their friends farewell, the family returned to Little Gidding, which they made their headquarters henceforth.

The household thus gathered at Little Gidding consisted of perhaps forty persons—this is the number given by Peckard—and included old Mrs. Ferrar, Nicholas Ferrar, John Ferrar with his wife and three children, Susanna Collett (*née* Ferrar) with her husband and sixteen children, some of whom may have been born subsequently at Gidding, and other young relatives unnamed, of

whose presence we get intimations from time to time. It is no small testimony to the force of Nicholas Ferrar's personality that these elder people especially broke up their own homes, and came at his summons to live a life of austere usefulness in preference to the easier conditions imposed by the world about them. The general approval of Churchmen which greeted and followed Ferrar's decision to revive the 'religious' life in the English Church is also a testimony to his own daring insight, which made clear to him the need, and endowed him with the courage to face the storm such a step was certain to arouse in Puritan circles, where the blind and bigoted dislike of Rome often led to the repudiation of much that was perfectly legitimate in Christianity at large. Practically the revival bore little fruit in the way of disciples until our own day, although, too, there is evidence that the good seed was not sown in vain. In 1664 we read of Dr. Buck, one of the royal chaplains, expressing his 'concern at the want of Religious houses in the Church of England,' and it seems clear from the existence of a form of service for such houses that the later Nonjurors at least contemplated the establishment of institutions on these lines; but as we know, it was reserved for the Oxford Revivalists in the nineteenth century to take practical steps in this direction. Meanwhile Ferrar deserves every credit for realising and supplying the need in the spiritual life of his own time.

The church at Little Gidding was, as we have seen, little better than a neglected ruin when the

Ferrars took it over, and they must practically have rebuilt it. 'In those additions which were made to the church there were none of the family that had not a hand, and they that through absence could not do it themselves, had a stone laid by some other hands.' What the original building was like we have nothing to show: of its appearance as it was under the Ferrar régime there is a rough record in the woodcut which adorns the title-page of the scurrilous *Arminian Nunnery* pamphlet, reproduced herewith. This shows the church from the south-west, the door and windows with semicircular heads, a circular window in the western gable, and a round, battlemented tower against the north wall, under which, probably, was 'the fair island seat,' which Mrs. Ferrar and her daughters occupied according to Lenton's letter, or, as John Ferrar describes it, 'an isle of the church, that joined on the north side, close at the back of the reading-place, where all the women sat always.' Windows appear in the tower, and we learn that Ferrar affixed to it three dials on the east, west, and south, to tell the time, but these do not show in the illustration. The mischief subsequently wrought by the Puritans necessitated the rebuilding of the west end, more or less in its present form, shortening the nave by some seven feet, while the tower has wholly disappeared. The door and windows are now square-headed. In respect of the church Mrs. Ferrar was exacting, and would not rest until she had brought its adornments and fittings to a high pitch of comfort and decency—a task which, with

THE  
ARMINIAN  
NUNNERY:

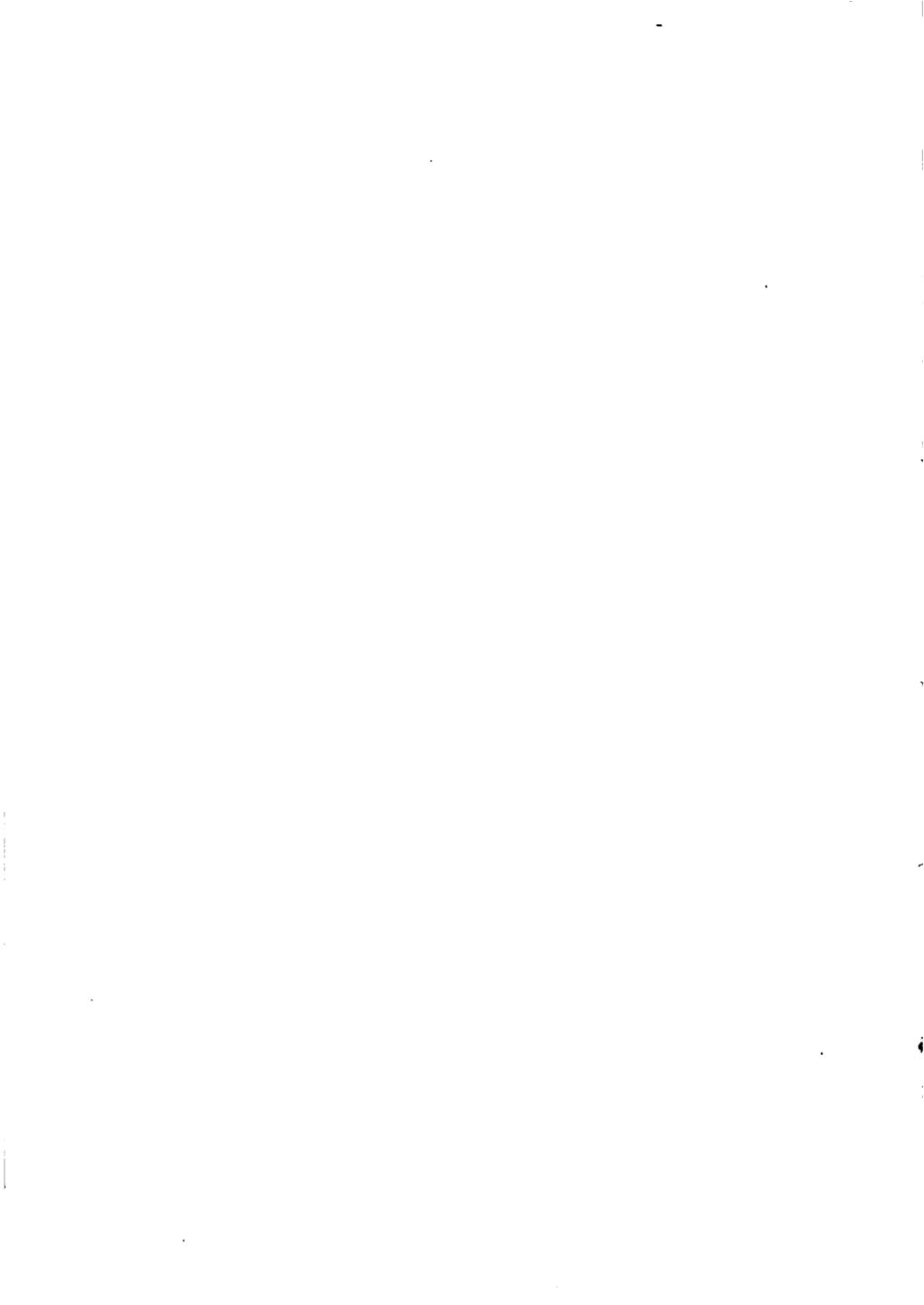
OR,  
A BRIEFE DESCRIPTION  
and Relation of the late erected Mo-  
nastical Place, called the ARMINIAN  
NUNNERY at little GIDDING in  
HVENTINGTON-SHIRE.

*Humbly recommended to the wise consideration  
of this present PARLIAMENT.*

The Foundation is by a Company of FARRARS  
at GIDDING.



TITLE-PAGE OF *THE ARMINIAN NUNNERY* PAMPHLET, SHOWING  
LITTLE GIDDING CHURCH AS IT WAS IN THE FERRARS' DAY



the necessary repairs to the house, occupied about two years.

‘She therefore new floored and wainscotted it throughout. She provided also two new suites of furniture for the reading-desk, pulpit, and Communion-table: one for week days, and the other for Sundays and other festivals. The furniture for week days was of green cloth, with suitable cushions and carpets. That for festivals was of rich blue cloth, with cushions of the same, decorated with lace, and fringe of silver. The pulpit was fixed on the north, and the reading-desk over against it, on the south side of the church, and both on the same level; it being thought improper that a higher place should be appointed for preaching than that which was allotted for prayer. A new font was also provided, the leg, laver, and cover all of brass, handsomely and expensively wrought and carved; with a large brass lectern, or pillar and eagle of brass for the Bible. The font was placed by the pulpit, and the lectern by the reading-desk.

‘The half-pace, or elevated floor, on which the Communion-table stood at the end of the chancel, with the stalls on each side, was covered with blue taffety, and cushions of the finest taffety and blue silk. The space behind the Communion-table, under the east window, was elegantly wainscotted, and adorned with the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Apostles’ Creed, engraved on four beautiful tablets of brass, gilt.

‘The Communion-table itself was furnished with a silver patin, a silver chalice, and silver candlesticks, with large wax candles in them. Many other candles of the same sort were set up in every part of the church, and on all the pillars of the stalls. And these were not for the purposes of superstition, but for real use; which for a great part of the year the fixed hours of prayer made necessary both for morning and evening service. Mrs. Ferrar also taking a great delight in church music, built a gallery at the bottom of the church for the organ. Thus was the church decently furnished, and ever after kept elegantly neat and clean.’

Lenton’s description corresponds closely with this, and he adds that the Communion-table stood upon the half-pace ‘not altar-wise, as reported,’ a concession, doubtless, to Bishop Williams’s well-known prejudice against the ‘altar-wise’ position insisted upon by his great opponent, Laud. The present east window is a semicircular-headed Jacobean or Georgian work; but it appears from the conversation reported by John Ferrar (Mayor, page 79) that in Nicholas Ferrar’s time there were three windows in the chancel—probably lancets surviving from the older church, and that they were filled with plain glass. Dr. Morison, the bishop’s chancellor, on a visit of official inspection, suggested that he should fill ‘the chancel window’ with ‘painted glass and in it a crucifix,’ to which Ferrar replied that had he found it there when he came he would not have disturbed it, but that he would

set up nothing of the kind 'without command of authority.' And it may here be noted that of the objects above described there still survive in the church the altar of cedar-wood, the font and lectern (the latter recovered some fifty years since by Mr. Hopkinson, the restorer of the church, from an adjoining pond, where it had been cast by the Puritans in 1646, after the eagle had been despoiled of his silver beak and claws), the silk carpet for the altar, the brass table containing the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and Commandments, and a piece of tapestry. The silver flagon still in use is inscribed:

'What S<sup>r</sup> Edwyn Sandys bequeathed  
To  
The remembrance of freindship,  
His freinde hath consecrated  
To  
The Honour of God's Service.  
1629.'

On the handle is inscribed: 'For the Church of Little Gidding in Huntingdonshyer.' And round the offertory dish is written: 'For the Church of Little Gidding of the Guift of Susan Beckwith.'

## CHAPTER V

THE RULE OF LITTLE GIDDING  
(1626)

‘No cruel guard of diligent cares, that keep  
Crowned woes awake, as things too wise for sleep :  
But reverent discipline, and religious fear,  
And soft obedience, find sweet biding here ;  
Silence and sacred rest ; peace and pure joys.’

THE Rule of life for the community at Little Gidding was carefully drawn up by Nicholas Ferrar at the outset, and there is nothing to suggest any serious variation having been made from it henceforward. Puritanism busied itself after its manner, with concocting false and scandalous reports regarding the community and its ways. In 1631 Bishop Williams, their diocesan, paid them a friendly unofficial visit in order to ascertain the facts for himself, and after making an exhaustive examination gave them his unqualified approval, ‘and bade them in God’s name proceed.’ ‘They did practise nothing,’ he said, ‘but what was according to the law of the Church of England. I wish there were many more such in the Church and kingdom.’ Other divines of unexceptionable orthodoxy bore similar testimony,

if any were needed, for Williams was far from being an advanced Churchman, as Churchmanship was then understood. For a vivid picture of the Rule in practise it would probably be difficult to better that presented in the unforgettable pages of *John Inglesant*, and a clear glimpse of it is obtained in Lenton's letter (to which further reference will be made), but meanwhile it will not be amiss if we try to piece together a more complete description from the scattered notices which are still available.

The necessary repairs and alterations to the great house occupied about two years. One large room was set aside for a family oratory, and two smaller rooms adjoining for night oratories for the men and the women respectively. Each of Ferrar's nephews and nieces had separate rooms, and three more were set aside for the school-masters. 'Without doors he laid out the gardens in a beautiful manner, and formed them in many fair walks.' A large dovecote in the grounds was converted into a schoolhouse, 'which being larger than was wanted for the young people of the family, permission was given to as many of the neighbouring towns as desired it, to send their children thither, where they were instructed without expence, in reading, writing, arithmetic, and the principles of the Christian religion.' Three masters were provided, 'the first to teach English to strangers, and English and Latin to the children of the family; the second, good writing in all its branches; the third, to instruct them in singing, and performing upon the organ, viol, and lute.'

Mrs. Collett, his sister, was, we learn incidentally, 'a distinguished performer' upon the lute. Peckard gives the following account of the system of education pursued :

'For all these things the children had their stated times and hours, so that though they were always in action, and always learning something, yet the great variety of things they were taught prevented all weariness and made everything to be received with pleasure. And he (Nicholas Ferrar) was used to say that he who could attain to the well-timing things, had gained an important point, and found the surest way to accomplish great designs with ease. On Thursdays and Saturdays in the afternoons, the youths were permitted to recreate themselves with bows and arrows, with running, leaping, and vaulting, and what other manly exercises they themselves liked best. With respect to the younger part of the females, the general mode of education was similar to that of the boys, except where the difference of sex made a different employment or recreation proper.'

As the children grew older Ferrar used to undertake their religious instruction himself, giving up several hours daily for that purpose. He placed great stress upon the learning by heart of passages of Scripture, and especially of the whole Book of Psalms, upon which he used to comment at length and clearly. 'But above all things he was anxiously attentive to daily catechetical lectures,

according to the doctrine of the Church of England.' Undenominational education was evidently far from his thoughts. As the four elder nieces, the daughters of Mrs. Collett, grew up, they were required to take the housekeeping in turn for a month at a time, and their accounts were regularly kept and audited. There was an infirmary for sick members of the household, and a sort of outpatients' room was provided, where surgical and other help was given to such of their neighbours as required it, and here Ferrar's own medical knowledge stood him in excellent stead. The surgeon's chest and the provision of medicines was regulated with the same exactness as everything else in the household, and 'the young ladies were required to dress the wounds of those who were hurt, in order to give them readiness and skill in this employment, and to habituate them to the virtues of humility and tenderness of heart.' The dispensary was under Ferrar's own care. Thus, says the chronicler, 'did Mr. Ferrar form his nieces to be wise and useful, virtuous and valuable women.'

The time-table of the household would strike the degenerate folk of our day as severe. On Sundays the hour of rising was five in winter and four in summer, and old Mrs. Ferrar was as punctual in her appearance as the rest of them. After performing their private devotions they gathered in the large common room, where in winter a fire was allowed, and there Nicholas Ferrar awaited them, to hear the repetition by the children of the chapters and psalms which

they had committed to memory. At seven o'clock they withdrew again to their rooms, and remained there until nine, when the bell began to ring for prayers in the church. Again collecting in the common room, a hymn was sung to an organ accompaniment, and the party set forth in procession for the church. The three schoolmasters, in black gowns and Monmouth caps, led the way; next came Mrs. Ferrar's grandsons, walking two and two, and after them John Ferrar and Mr. Collett, all similarly clad. Nicholas Ferrar followed, in surplice, hood, and square cap, escorting his mother; and then, two and two, Mrs. Collett and her daughters, the servants, and on Sundays the Psalm-children. 'As they came into the church, every person made a low obeisance, and all took their appointed places. The masters and gentlemen sat in the chancel; the youths knelt on the upper step of the half-pace; Mrs. Ferrar, her daughters, and all her granddaughters, in a fair island seat' (or, as Jebb puts it, 'the women sat by themselves, as they did in the ancient church'). 'Mr. N. Ferrar at coming in made a low obeisance; a few paces farther, a lower; and at the half-pace a lower still: then went into the reading-desk, and read matins according to the Book of Common Prayer. This service over, they returned in the same order, and with the same solemnity.' On their return some members of the family sat in a gallery, or in winter by the fire in the large room, and heard the Psalm-children repeat the psalms which they had got by heart during the week, and paid them the pennies they



*Photo by*

*Percy J. Slater, Sawtry*

**THE CHURCH AT LITTLE GIDDING—INTERIOR**



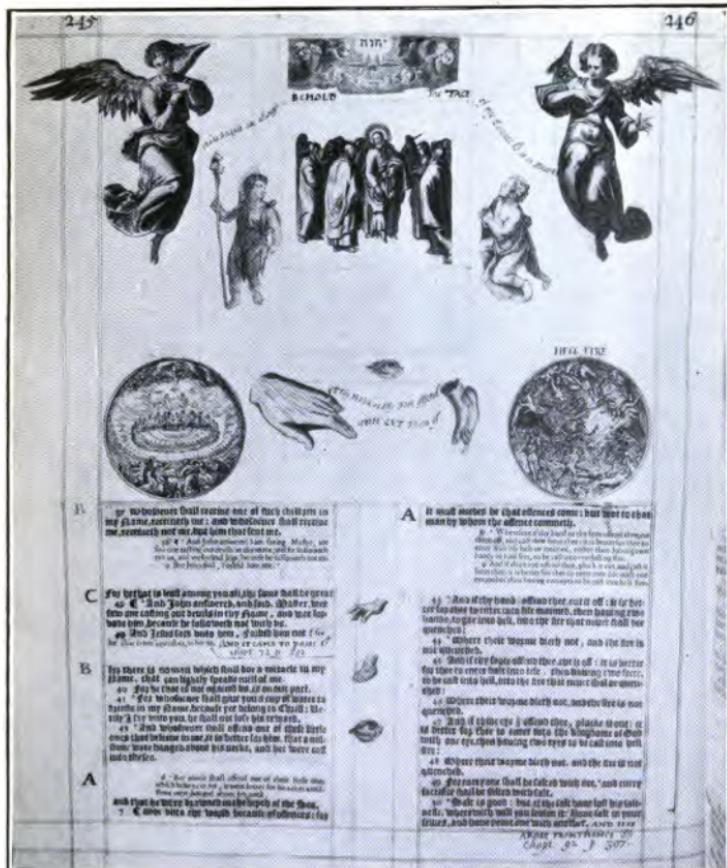
had earned. Often, it is said, the children carried off with them 'groats apiece and more.' The 'Psalm-children,' it should be explained, were children from the surrounding parishes, who had been encouraged by the Ferrars to get the Book of Psalms by heart. 'To encourage them to this performance, each was presented with a Psalter: all were to repair to Gidding every Sunday morning, and each was to repeat his psalm, till they could all repeat the whole book. These Psalm-children, as they were called, more than a hundred in number, received every Sunday a penny for each psalm they could repeat perfectly, and their dinner.' The effect upon the manners of the neighbourhood, according to the testimony of the clergy and others, was remarkable, and the parents of the children, too, bore similar witness. Some of them begged that Ferrar would also undertake the instruction of the children in the Catechism, but this he refused firmly, as an encroachment upon the office of the parish clergy and the parents.

At half-past ten the vicar of Steeple Gidding came over with his own parishioners, and was met by the Ferrar household and the Psalm-children; the bell rang for service, to which they went in procession, as before. Ferrar proceeded to the altar and read the Ante-Communion office, and the vicar of Steeple Gidding preached, after which they returned to the house in the same order as they came. At noon trestles were laid for the Psalm-children in the great hall, 'round which the children stood in great order,' and Mrs. Ferrar and

the family came in to see them served, Mrs. Ferrar herself setting the first dish, 'to give an example in humility.'

'Grace was said, and then the bell rang for the family, who thereupon repaired to the great dining-room, and stood in order round the table. Whilst dinner was serving, they sang a hymn to the organ; then grace was said by the minister of the parish, and they sat down. During dinner one of the younger people, whose turn it was, read a chapter in the Bible, and when that was finished, another recited some chosen story out of the Book of Martyrs, or Mr. Ferrar's short histories.'

After dinner freedom was given to all until two o'clock, when the bell rang for evening service at Steeple Gidding church, whither they all went in procession. On their return the family assembled in the oratory of the house, where they 'said all their psalms at one time, which they said on other days of the week at set hours and at several times.' This done they were at liberty again until five in winter and six in summer, when the bell summoned them to supper, which was conducted under the same conditions as dinner. After this there was liberty until eight, when the bell called to prayers in the oratory and a hymn was sung to the organ; then the children asked a blessing of their parents, according to the pious custom of the day, which the Puritans were already beginning to denounce as popish, and all the household retired



A PAGE FROM THE *HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS*,  
BRITISH MUSEUM



to their rooms. The rule of the house forbade all wandering about the house after evening prayers.

Holy Communion was regularly celebrated on the first Sunday of every month, and on the great Festivals of the Church, the vicar of Steeple Gidding acting as celebrant, and Nicholas Ferrar assisting as deacon. Those of the servants who received the Communion dined on that day with Mrs. Ferrar and the rest of the family. The Saturday afternoon preceding 'was employed by the careful master of the house in explaining that sacred mystery to the younger, and in exhorting the elder and in preparing them all for that best and noblest entertainment of such holy souls.'

Of the week-day routine we have the following account:

'They rose at four; at five went to the oratory to prayers; at six said the psalms of the hour (for every hour had its appointed psalms), with some portion of the Gospel, till Mr. Ferrar had finished his Concordance, when a chapter of that work was substituted in place of the portion of the Gospel. Then they sang a short hymn, repeated some passages of Scripture, and at half-past six went to church to matins. At seven said the psalms of the hour, sang the short hymn, and [the children]<sup>1</sup> went to breakfast. Then the young people repaired to their respective places of instruction. The old gentlewoman took her chair, inspecting her daughters

<sup>1</sup> Thus Jebb—according to the custom of the day, breakfast was for children and invalids only.

and grandchildren as they sat at their books or other good employments in great silence, or at least avoiding all vain talking and jesting that was not convenient. No hour but had its business. Eight, nine, ten o'clock come, those hours had their several companies, that came and did as at former hours: psalms said and a head of the Concordance, the organs playing, the hymn sung at each hour, as the clock struck, that gave notice to all of the time passing. At ten, to the church to Litany every day of the week, as their bishop had given them leave. At eleven to dinner (after saying the hourly office). At which seasons were regular readings in rotation, from the Scripture, from the Book of Martyrs, and from short histories drawn up by Mr. Ferrar, and adapted to the purpose of moral instruction. Recreation was permitted till one; then the bell tolled for the boys to school, and those that had their turns came up into the great chamber again, to say their psalms and head of Concordance, sing a hymn and play on the organ whilst they sung. There old Mrs. Ferrar commonly sat till four o'clock, and, as before, each hour had its performance. Church at four for Evensong; supper at five, or sometimes six. Diversions till eight. Then prayers in the oratory, where a hymn was sung, the organs playing, and afterwards all retired to their respective apartments.'

The Book of Psalms was invariably said right through during the day, instalments of suitable length being repeated at each hourly office by the

members of the community, young or old, told off for the purpose, turns being regularly assigned. The hymn most frequently sung was the 'Angel's Hymn' from George Wither's recently published 'Hymnes and Songs of the Church' (to which a specific reference is made in the Story Books), doubtless to its accompanying melody by Orlando Gibbons, still familiar to English Churchmen:

'Thus Angells sung, and thus sing wee;  
To God on high all glory be:  
Let Him on earth His peace bestowe,  
And unto men His favour show.'

George Wither had been in old days a *protégé* of Nicholas Ferrar's old friend, the Princess Elizabeth, and it is not unlikely that they made each other's acquaintance in her Court.

The nightly retirement was always ceremonious: the children knelt for blessing to their grandmother and parents, and the grandmother was escorted to her room by her sons and daughters. It was also arranged, after discussion with George Herbert and other divines, to keep up regular watches throughout the night, when the Psalms were recited every four hours antiphonally by the watchers on their knees. Nicholas Ferrar himself bore his share in these exercises twice, and latterly three times, a week, and young Nicholas Ferrar (John's son) and Ferrar Collett, another nephew, loved to watch with him. The men and the women watchers occupied rooms apart, and sometimes the servants would ask to share their vigils. Fires were provided in cold

weather, and every care taken to do no injury to health. In summer time these vigils were often kept in the church.

The following is a glimpse of the Gidding practice from Walton's *Life of George Herbert*:

'He and his family, which were like a little college, and about thirty in number, did most of them keep Lent, and all Ember-weeks strictly, both in fasting, and using all these mortifications and prayers that the Church hath appointed to be then used: and, he and they did the like constantly on Fridays, and on the vigils, or eves appointed to be fasted before the Saints' days: and this frugality and abstinence turned to the relief of the poor: but this was but a part of his charity, none but God and he knew the rest.'

Of the famous Harmonies perhaps one cannot do better than transcribe a description, based upon John Ferrar's original account showing the system and aim of this undertaking.

'Amongst other articles of instruction and amusement Mr Ferrar entertained a Cambridge bookbinder's daughter that bound rarely, who taught the whole family, females as well as males, the whole art and skill of bookbinding gilding, lettering, and what they call pasting-printing, by the use of the rolling-press. By this assistance he composed a full harmony, or concordance, of the four evangelists, adorned with

many beautiful pictures, which required more than a year for the composition, and was divided into 150 heads or chapters. For this purpose he set apart a handsome room near the oratory which they named the Concordance Chamber, coloured over with green pleasant colour varnished. Here he had large tables round the sides of the walls, two printed copies of the evangelists, of the same edition, two very large and great presses, and great store of the best and strongest white paper. Here he spent more than an hour every day in the contrivance of this book, and in directing his nieces, who attended him for that purpose, how they should cut out such and such particular passages out of the two printed copies of any part of each evangelist, and then lay them together so as to perfect such a head or chapter as he had designed. This they did first roughly, and then with nice knives and scissors so neatly fitted each passage to the next belonging to it, and afterwards pasted them so even and smoothly together, upon large sheets of the best white paper, by the help of the rolling-press, that many curious persons who saw the work when it was done, were deceived, and thought that it had been printed in the ordinary way.'

The object of the compilation is thus set forth in the rather cumbrous title:

‘The Actions, Doctrines, and other passages touching our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus

## CHAPTER VI

## SOME FRIENDSHIPS OF NICHOLAS FERRAR

'Have no friendships but with those who can communicate with you in virtues ; and the more exquisite the virtues are which shall be the matter of your communications, the more perfect shall your friendship also be.'

THE circumstances attendant upon the close friendship which certainly subsisted between Nicholas Ferrar and George Herbert are somewhat obscure. There is no actual record of their even having met. Walton alludes to 'that slight acquaintance which was begun at their being contemporaries at Cambridge,' and Barnabas Oley writes in a similar sense, and that the personal acquaintance may have so begun is likely enough. But it is difficult to believe that it was not continued, if only for this reason, that Ferrar was in close and constant intercourse during the years that he spent in the service of the Virginia Company with Sir John Danvers, Herbert's step-father, whose house at Chelsea—said to be that once occupied by Sir Thomas More—was the scene of more than one anxious consultation. Again, Ferrar's first cousin and close friend, Arthur Woodnoth, was the warm admirer and friend of both Danvers and Herbert; it was to vindicate Danvers that Woodnoth indited the pamphlet





*Photo by*

THE CHURCH AT LEIGHTON BROMSWOLD

*Percy J. Slater, Snaury*

to which reference has already been made; while his close connection with Herbert is known to all the world, and may be read at length in Walton's memoir, which, too, avoids all reference to Danvers. We are driven to the conclusion, therefore, that in this, as in other instances, Danvers's name has been as far as possible eliminated from all association with the Ferrars on account of his subsequent share in the quasi-judicial murder of King Charles I., a crime upon which Churchmen and Royalists looked with a horror and loathing that justified in their eyes such grave lapses from literary accuracy as the excision of everything that might seem to connect the Ferrars with a murderer of the King. What line Arthur Woodnoth would have adopted had he lived to know of Danvers's treason cannot be conjectured, but it is most likely that he would not have permitted his Virginia pamphlet to see the light, but for which, the truth regarding this matter would never have come out. Meanwhile, with these excisions vanishes the record of the meetings of Ferrar and George Herbert.

Taking all this into consideration, it is probably due to something more than a coincidence that in July 1626 Bishop Williams of Lincoln appointed Herbert, who had now taken Deacon's Orders, to the prebend of Leighton Ecclesia (the village is now known as Leighton Bromswold), which is only six miles distant from Little Gidding. Herbert, however, did not reside there, being perhaps detained by his official duties at Cambridge, and he did his utmost to persuade Ferrar

to accept the living for himself, as being within easy reach of Gidding. But this would have involved Ferrar's proceeding to Priest's Orders, which, as we have seen, he had determined not to do, and accordingly he refused his friend's offer. He suggested, however, that Herbert should exert himself to raise funds for the rebuilding of the church, 'seeing the fair church of Leighton was fallen down a long time and lay in the dust,' promising for his own part all the assistance that he could give in money and kind, as well as all necessary superintendence. A 'brief' for the work of restoration had already been obtained, but lack of funds had prevented anything more being done or attempted, and the sum needed was estimated at £2000—a larger sum in those days than it is now. Urged on by Ferrar, however, Herbert set himself to raise the money among his friends and relatives, in spite of opposition at the outset from his mother, who said, 'George, it is not for your weak body and empty purse to undertake to build churches.' But she was won over by his persuasions, and in the end subscribed as liberally as any one else. The heads of the Herbert family also contributed; so did that ardent Churchman and gallant gentleman, James, Duke of Lenox, who had a house in the neighbourhood (his descendant still bears the title of Clifton of Leighton Bromswold) ultimately completing the tower at his own cost; and so did Nicholas Ferrar and Arthur Woodnoth; while John Ferrar did not spare himself in choosing the materials and supervising the workmen. Nicholas Ferrar's own share of the work seems to





*Photo by*

*Percy J. Slater, Savory*

THE CHURCH AT LEIGHTON BROMSWOLD—INTERIOR

have been that of architect and designer, as we infer from some notes by Baker of a lost portion of a letter to Ferrar from Herbert, and the result was a handsome cruciform building, 'and for the decency and beauty,' says Walton, 'I am assured it is the most remarkable parish church that this nation affords.' Ferrar's hand may be traced in the interior arrangements, which exactly correspond with those at Little Gidding. Thus Walton describes them :

'He [Herbert] lived to see it so wainscoated as to be exceeded by none; and by his order the reading-pew and pulpit were a little distant from each other, and both of an equal height; for he would often say, "They should neither have a precedence or priority of the other; but that prayer and preaching, being equally useful, might agree like brethren, and have an equal honour and estimation."

Walton takes the opportunity to interpolate at this point a note of that unobtrusive, but evidently remarkable man, Arthur Woodnoth (whom we have already seen as an active worker in the cause of the Virginia Company, and in defence of his friend, Sir John Danvers), closely associated by blood and sympathies with the Ferrars. He was a man of affairs, being a goldsmith or banker in Foster Lane, a devout man, who at one time contemplated taking Holy Orders, from which he seems to have been dissuaded by Nicholas Ferrar, and the intimate friend and helper of

George Herbert. His son, Ralph, was educated at Gidding.

‘He was a man that had considered overgrown estates do often require more care and watchfulness to preserve than get them; and considered that there be many discontents that riches cure not; and did therefore set limits to himself as to desire of wealth: and having attained so much as to be able to shew some mercy to the poor, and preserve a competence for himself, he dedicated the remaining part of his life to the service of God, and to be useful for his friends; and he proved to be so to Mr. Herbert; for, beside his own bounty, he collected and returned most of the money that was paid for the rebuilding of that church; he kept all the account of the charges, and would often go down to state them, and see all the workmen paid. When I have said that this good man was a useful friend to Mr. Herbert’s father, and to his mother, and continued to be so to him till he closed his eyes on his death-bed, I will forbear to say more till I have the next fair occasion to mention the holy friendship that was betwixt him and Mr. Herbert.’

Ferrar’s own account of this business of Leighton Church was characteristically self-effacing; it is to be found in the preface to *The Temple*.

‘As for worldly matters, his [Herbert’s] love and esteem to them was so little, as no man can

more ambitiously seek than he did earnestly endeavour the resignation of an Ecclesiastical dignitie, which he was possessour of. But God permitted not the accomplishment of this desire, having ordained him His instrument for reedifying the Churc belonging thereunto, that had layen ruined almost twenty yeares. The reparation whereof having been uneffectually attempted by publick collections, was in the end by his own and some few others private freewill offerings successfully effected.'

Of the further intercourse of Ferrar and Herbert there is little to tell. 'They loved each other most entirely,' says Barnabas Oley, 'and their very souls cleaved together most intimately, and drove a large stock of Christian intelligence together.' In 1630 Herbert was ordained priest, and given the cure of Bemerton, near Salisbury, 'more pleasant than healthful,' as Walton observes, where he survived for barely three years, but created and left behind him an imperishable example of what a parish priest should be. Not long before his death he tried, unsuccessfully, to exchange his living for one of inferior value near Gidding. He maintained his correspondence with the Ferrars, 'by loving and endearing letters,' and nowhere was he more sincerely mourned than at Little Gidding, where a prayer specially composed was offered daily by the family for his recovery. They prayed God—

'to continue to us that singular benefit which Thou hast given us in the friendship of Thy

servant, our dear brother, who now lieth on the bed of sickness. Let him abide with us yet awhile, for the furtherance of our faith. . . . Thou hast made him a great help, and furtherance of the best things amongst us, how then can we but esteem the loss of him a chastisement from Thy displeasure!'

A messenger from the Ferrars, Edmund Duncon, afterwards rector of Friern Barnet, saw Herbert just before his death, and carried his last messages to his 'brother Farrer,' together with the manuscript of a little book of verses—'If he think it may turn to the advantage of any dejected poor soul, let it be made public: if not, let him burn it: for, I and it are less than the least of God's mercies.' This little book was soon afterwards published under Ferrar's auspices as *The Temple*, and the title was Ferrar's own, based on the text 'In His temple doth every man speak of His honour.' All the world now knows how the Censor wished to strike out the famous lines:

'Religion stands a-tiptoe in our land,  
Ready to pass to the American strand.'

But not everybody knows that it is to the stubborn attitude of Nicholas Ferrar, who threatened to withdraw the book altogether if they were not included, that we owe their preservation. Ferrar prepared the poems for the press with his own hand, with all the fastidious finish characteristic of the Gidding work, and the delicate penmanship of the copy in the Bodleian, indorsed by the

~~✓ Sanderson.~~

~~The Original of Mr George Herbert's Temple,  
as it was at first licensed for the press.~~

The Temple  
Plat. 29. 8.

In his Temple doth every man  
speak of his honour.

### The Dedication

Lord, my first fruits present themselves to thee;  
Not mine neither, for from thee they com<sup>e</sup>;  
And must reverence Accept of them, and thee.  
And make us stony, who shall sing best thy Name.  
Lame & thin wee sister, who shall make a gain<sup>e</sup>?  
Dries, who shall drye themselves, or me, thyaine.

*B. Amy Brocas.*

Th: Brambrig  
M. F. N.  
William Brable  
Tho: Ferrar



Censor, is easily recognisable as that of Ferrar himself, though this fact does not seem yet to have been generally realised. One writer, Dr. Gregory Smith, goes so far as to assert that the type of the first edition was set up at Little Gidding, but there seems no ground for this assertion.

Only six months previously Nicholas Ferrar had submitted to Herbert his translation of Valdesso's *Divine Considerations*, which Herbert annotated and returned with a prefatory letter, generally approving them, and bidding Ferrar have them published. This was not done until 1638, the year after Nicholas Ferrar's death, when Herbert's annotations and letter appeared along with them. Juan de Valdés, here spoken of as Valdesso, was a Spanish thinker of rare distinction, who wrote in the first half of the sixteenth century. He attracted the notice of the Inquisition in his native country, and found it expedient to betake himself to Naples, where he gathered around him a group of disciples and taught them unmolested. It is hard to see what the Inquisition found to object to in his teaching: he certainly impugned no doctrine of the Church, and he vigorously condemned the Lutheran schism, while the practical religion which he inculcated is, beyond all question, of a very lofty order. Ferrar got hold of an Italian version of his book, published at Basle, translated from a Spanish original which has vanished. A pleasant light upon Ferrar's own scholarly turn of mind is shed by a passage in his preface:

'There be some few expressions and similitudes in it, at which not only the weak reader may stumble, and the curious quarrell, but also the wise and charitable reader may justly blame. To have removed these few stumbling blocks, or offensive passages, by leaving them out, or by altering them, had not been the worke of a Translator, but of an Author; besides the ill example of altering antient Authors, which is one of the greatest causes of the corruption of truth and learning. Therefore it hath been thought fit to print the Book, according to the Authors own copy.'

A garbled copy of Ferrar's translation was issued from Cambridge in the year 1646, with what object it is hard to see. Ferrar's original text is now, however, to be had in a cheap and handy modern edition.

Another name imperishably associated with that of the Ferrars is that of Richard Crashaw, the unhappy poet and mystic who was swept away to destruction in the turbid flood of the Puritan domination. His father was William Crashaw, a preacher who was largely interested in the Virginia Company, on behalf of which he preached more than one stirring sermon. In that capacity the father could scarcely fail to have been acquainted with the Ferrars, who would probably have figured vividly in the childish memories of his son Richard, born in 1613. William Crashaw was an ardent disputant in the Roman controversy, as several acrimonious books and pamphlets survive to show,

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*The Church**The Altar*

A broken Altar, Lord, thy Servant's Boards  
 Made of a Heart, & cemented with tears.  
 whose parts are as thy Hand did frame;  
 No workman's tools have touch'd y<sup>e</sup> same.

A Heart alone  
 Is such a stony,  
 As nothing, but  
 Thy power can cut.  
 Wherefor each part  
 Of my Good Heart  
 Meets in this frame.

To praise thy Name.  
 That, if I chance to soil my peace,  
 These stones to praise thee may not cease.  
 O let thy blessed sacrifice be mine,  
 And sanctify this Altar to be thine. —



and it is probable that Richard derived no little of his anti-Protestant bias from the unbridled licence of speech in which his father vented his theological prejudices. Richard Crashaw, after being educated at the Charterhouse School, went up to Pembroke in March 1631-2, as a pensioner. He soon attracted notice by his scholarship, and attained proficiency in Hebrew, Greek, Italian, and Spanish, in addition, one must presume, to Latin. In 1634 he published a volume of Epigrams upon Scriptural Subjects, which contained the famous line:

*'Nympha pudica Deum vidit, et erubuit.'*

And he very early made his mark as a poet of no mean order in his native tongue. At some time previous to 1636 he migrated to Peterhouse, whether attracted by the beauty of the new chapel, or by the fame of the new master, Dr. Cosin, cannot now be known with certainty. But long ere this the fame of the Ferrars had reached Cambridge, and many devout men were wont to go over to Gidding to share their watchings and Sunday devotions. Among them Crashaw, partly perhaps on account of his previous acquaintance with them, and certainly drawn by his own religious sympathies, was soon prominent. 'Several religious persons,' says Peckard, 'both in the neighbourhood and from distant places, attended these watchings: and amongst them the celebrated Mr. Richard Crashaw, fellow of Peterhouse, who was very intimate in the family, and frequently came from Cambridge for this purpose, and at his return often watched in Little St. Mary's church

near Peterhouse.' In May of 1636 Ferrar Collett was placed under Crashaw's charge at Peterhouse—a high mark of confidence on the part of the Ferrar clan.

Traces of this intimacy are not difficult to discover—conjecturally at least, though sometimes with certainty—in Crashaw's poems. In 1633 there appeared the volume entitled *The Temperate Man*, the joint work of Nicholas Ferrar and George Herbert, and to it were prefixed Crashaw's fine verses on Temperance :

' Hark hither, Reader: wilt thou see  
Nature her own physician be?  
Wilt see a man all his own wealth,  
His own music, his own health?  
A man whose sober soul can tell  
How to wear her garments well? . . .  
A soul whose intellectual beams  
No mists do mask, no lazy steams?  
A happy soul, that all the way  
To Heaven hath a Summer's day? . . .  
Wouldst see nests of new roses grow  
In a bed of rev'rend snow?  
Warm thoughts, free spirits, flattering  
Winter's self into a Spring?  
In sum, wouldst see a man that can  
Live to be old, and still a man?  
Whose latest, and most leaden hours  
Fall with soft wings, stuck with soft flowers,  
And when Life's sweet fable ends,  
Soul and body part like friends:  
No quarrels, murmurs, no delay:  
A kiss, a sigh, and so away?  
This rare one, Reader, wouldst thou see,  
Hark hither: and thyself be he ! '

It is hardly possible to miss the reference to the book-binding damsels of Little Gidding in the 'Ode which was prefixed to a little Prayer-book given to a young gentlewoman,' very likely Mary Collett, who is known to have excelled in this 'art and mystery':

'Lo here a little volume, but great book !  
(Fear it not sweet,  
It is no hypocrite),  
Much larger in itself than in its look.  
A nest of new-born sweets ;  
Whose native fires disdaining  
To lie thus folded, and complaining  
Of these ignoble sheets,  
Affect more comely bands  
(Fair one) from thy kind hands ;  
And confidently look  
To find the rest  
Of a rich binding in your breast. . . .  
Hold but this book before your heart,  
Let prayer alone to play his part ;  
But O the heart,  
That studies this high art,  
Must be a sure house-keeper :  
And yet no sleeper.  
Dear Soul, be strong !  
Mercy will come ere long,  
And bring his bosom fraught with blessings,  
Flowers of never-fading graces,  
To make immortal dressings  
For worthy souls, whose wise embraces  
Store up themselves for Him, Who is alone  
The Spouse of virgins, and the Virgin's Son.'

Nor is it possible to suppose that Crashaw had not in his mind Little Gidding, the only religious house

that he knew, when he penned the famous 'Description of a Religious House and Condition of Life,' suggested by John Barclay's hexameters:

'Our lodgings hard and homely as our fare,  
 That chaste and cheap, as the few clothes we wear ;  
 Those coarse and negligent, as the natural locks  
 Of these loose groves ; rough as th' unpolish'd rocks.  
 A hasty portion of prescribed sleep ;  
 Obedient slumbers, that can wake and weep,  
 And sing, and sigh, and work, and sleep again ;  
 Still rolling a round sphere of still-returning pain. . . .  
 No cruel guard of diligent cares, that keep  
 Crown'd woes awake, as things too wise for sleep :  
 But reverent discipline, and religious fear,  
 And soft obedience, find sweet biding here ;  
 Silence, and sacred rest ; peace and pure joys ; . . .  
 The self-rememb'ring soul sweetly recovers  
 Her kindred with the stars ; not basely hovers  
 Below : but meditates her immortal way  
 Home to the original source of Light and intellectual  
 day.'

In easier times Crashaw might have lived to become an ornament to the Church of his native land. But Puritan excesses had already driven him to look leniently upon Rome, and as early as 1635, in the verses prefixed to Shelford's *Five Pious Discourses*, he had recklessly 'blasphemed in caustic couplets, even that arch-dogma of the Protestant faith, that the Pope was Anti-Christ':

'Why, 'tis a point of Faith. Whate'er it be,  
 I'm sure it is no point of Charity.'

So he wrote, in this respect distancing Nicholas

Ferrar, who in the year before had protested to Lenton 'that he did as verily believe the Pope to be Anti-Christ as any article of his faith.' But the Great Rebellion drove him from Cambridge in 1643, and he next reappears in Paris in abject poverty ('being a meer scholar and very shiftless') and a recent convert to the Roman Church. Next he became secretary to Cardinal Palotta in Rome, by whom he was described as 'a man of angelical life'; but he fell foul of his patron's retinue, and had to betake himself to the monastery at Loretto, where he died, possibly by poison, some time between the months of April and August 1649. Protestant writers, incapable of understanding the man or sympathising with the tragedy of his life, wrote cruelly and scurrilously of him, but the verses of his friend Thomas Car describe him more justly and kindly:

‘No care  
Had he of earthly trash. What might suffice  
To fit his soul to heavenly exercise  
Sufficed him :  
What he might eat or wear he took no thought;  
His needful food he rather found than sought.’

And there we may well leave him.

‘For so many hoped years  
Of fruit, so many fruitless tears ;  
For so dear, so deep a trust,  
Sad requital, thus much dust.’

## CHAPTER VII

SOME VISITORS AT LITTLE GIDDING  
(1631—1634)

‘How far a little candle throws its beams :  
So shines a good deed in a naughty world.’

IT was not in the nature of things that such an establishment as that of Little Gidding should escape remark, and its inmates soon found themselves the object of much disagreeable curiosity. Then as now Puritanism was suspicious of anything that suggested the fruits of the Spirit or the dedicated life, and more and more as the years went on the Puritans made their dislike felt in ways still characteristic of their kind, first by falsehood, elaborate and sustained, and ultimately by ruffianly violence. The outcry began as early as 1631, when Bishop Williams ‘came privately to Gidding, to pay a visit to his old friend Mr. N. Ferrar, with whom he had contracted a friendship at the Virginia board, and for whom he ever held the highest and most affectionate esteem.’ (It is noteworthy that from 1631 to 1634 John and Nicholas Ferrar were members of the Commission of Virginia, appointed on June 17 of the former year.)

‘By this visit he [the bishop] had an opportunity to view the church, and the house, and to examine into their way of serving God, which had been much spoken against; to know also the soundness of the doctrine they maintained; to read the rules which Mr. N. Ferrar had drawn up for watching, fasting, and praying, for singing psalms and hymns, for their exercises in readings, and repetitions; for their distribution of alms, their care of the sick and wounded; and all other regularities of their institution. All which the bishop highly approved, and bade them in God’s name to proceed.’

‘From henceforth,’ adds Hacket, ‘these faithful ones flourished in good opinion.’ The testimony of Williams, who was so far from being an extreme man that he strongly opposed Laud in the controversy as to the proper position for the altar, ought to have been sufficient, but it was not. ‘As for Mr. Ferrar,’ says Oley, recalling these days—

‘he was so exercised with contradictions, as no man that lived so private as he desired to do, could possibly be more. I have heard him say, valuing (not resenting) his own sufferings in this kind, that to fry a faggot was not more martyrdom than continued obloquy. He was torn asunder as with mad horses, or crushed between the upper and nether millstone of contrary reports; that he was a papist, and that he was a puritan.’

‘They rose at midnight to prayers,’ says Fuller, ‘and other people most complained thereof, whose heads, I dare say, never ak’t for want of sleep.’ But a more serious charge against the community was that of fostering a nunnery on the Roman pattern, which, by way of a convenient term of abuse, was termed ‘Arminian.’ Arminius was a Dutch thinker who had ventured to impugn the infallibility of Calvin, especially in respect of his terrible teaching in regard to Predestination, taking the now generally accepted view that, however it comes about, men stand or fall in the sight of God by their merits and by nothing else; but militant Puritanism was Calvinistic, and would tolerate no teaching but that of its prophet. The general intention of the Gidding training in regard to the girls, was to fit them to become wives to the clergy; but two of the young ladies, Mary and Anna Collett, desired to devote themselves to the service of God in the unmarried state, and this was sufficient to give rise to a story that all the other ladies in the community wished to do so too. Bishop Williams at first discouraged, but ultimately sanctioned the ambitions of Mary and Anna Collett: of the other ladies there was of course no question, and in time they all (except Virginia Ferrar) married, as they were intended to do. So Puritanism labelled the place the ‘Arminian Nunnery,’ and made itself as coarsely disagreeable to the inoffensive inmates as malice and low-breeding in the disguise of fanaticism could suggest.

Visitors came in large numbers, and upon all

sorts of pretences, some even on the plea that they had lost their way; men of all classes and of all shades of opinion, scholars and illiterate, gentry and clergy, Churchmen, Roman Catholics, and Puritans. 'They received all who came with courteous civility; and from those who were inquisitive they concealed nothing: for in truth there was not anything either in their opinions or their practice that was in the least necessary to be concealed.' One of three learned priests of the Roman Communion, who visited Gidding and drew Ferrar into a long and good-humoured discussion, observed—

'that they found the master of the house another kind of man than they expected: a deep and solid man, of a wonderful memory, sharp-witted, and of a flaming eloquence: one who, besides his various reading, spoke out of experience, with insight into things, as well as books. In conclusion, he was heard to say, that this man, if he had lived to make himself known to the world, would give their Church her hands full to answer him, and trouble them in another manner than Luther had done.'

But though one may deplore the impertinent curiosity that lay at the root of many of these visits, it is a matter for unalloyed rejoicing that one of these visitors, Edward Lenton, a barrister, put on record his observations in an unstudied letter to his friend, Sir Thomas Hetley, which is still extant. This letter, it is true, produced disas-

trous consequences to the Gidding community in after years, but it is certain that the Puritans would have attacked them in any case, and that Lenton's letter only supplied a convenient peg to a libeller who would otherwise have found some other means of vilifying them. From internal evidence this letter can be dated in the early spring of 1634. It was on this letter that Carlyle based the astonishingly inaccurate and rather spiteful sketch in his *Cromwell*, which is the more astonishing, as an earlier study of this same document by Carlyle is pitched in an altogether different key, kindly, appreciative, and generally not inaccurate :

‘By what road shalt thou travel, O my soul? Surely the steepest road or the sternest, through Gethsemane fields, eremite Thebaids, through flaming death-portals, and the abysses of creation — any road in such case were easy: To Nicholas this world was all a dramatic shadow, infinitely important as symbolising heavenly higher worlds, not important otherwise.’

The letter itself is too long to transcribe, but is to be found in Hearne and elsewhere. Arriving soon after ten, he ‘found a fair house, fairly seated; to which I passed through a fine grove and sweet walks, letticed and gardened on both sides.’—

‘A man-servant brought me into a fair spacious parlour, whither, soon after, came to me the old

gentlewoman's second son [Nicholas Ferrar]: a batchelor, of a plain presence, but of able speech and parts. Who, after I had (as well as in such case I could) deprecated any ill conceit of me, for so unusual and bold a visit, entertained me very civilly and with much humility. . . . After deprecations and some compliments, he said I should see his mother, if I pleased. I shewing my desire, he went up into a chamber, and presently returned with these; namely, his mother, a tall, straight, clear-complexioned, grave matron, of eighty years of age: his older brother, married (but whether a widower, I asked not), a short, black-complexioned man: his apparel and hair so fashioned as made him shew priest-like: and his sister, married to one Mr. Colet: by whom she hath 14 or 15 children: all which are in the house (which I saw not yet). . . . I saluted the mother and daughter, not like nuns, but as we use to salute other women.'

After more apologies, Lenton proceeded to cross-question his hosts, drawing from Nicholas Ferrar a declaration of his belief that the Pope was Anti-Christ, and, for the nunnery, 'that the name of nuns was odious,' the truth being that 'two of his nieces had lived, one thirty, the other thirty-two years, virgins; and so resolved to continue (as he hoped they would), the better to give themselves to fasting and prayer: but had made no vows.' He gave particulars of the Gidding rule, and justified it, observing 'that they had found divers per-

plexities, distractions, and almost utter ruin, in their callings,' and that if others knew what comfort and even material prosperity had accrued to them from their change of life, they, too, might adopt it. As to crosses, 'they were not ashamed of that badge of the Christian profession which the first propugners of the faith bare in their banners, and which we, in our Church discipline, retain to this day.' Lenton then, after taking some refreshment, 'as in a parenthesis,' accompanied the party to church, noting that one of the ladies—probably Mary Collett—wore a 'fryer's grey gown.' He noted the fittings of the church, and that the Communion-table stood upon the half-pace, 'not altar-wise'—clearly a concession to Bishop Williams, their diocesan, who insisted that the altars in parish churches should stand 'after the Puritan manner, with the two ends pointing east and west.' After service Ferrar justified his 'courtesies' and other ritual by the command to 'do all things with decency and order.' It was now nearly twelve, and Lenton called for his horse, hoping that he would be asked to remain to dinner, but he was taken at his word, and politely bowed off the premises. He made further inquiries as he returned, and thus summed up the general opinion:

'I heard also that they never roast any meat; only boil and bake (but not in paste), that their servants may not be much hindered from their devotions. And that they have but one horse amongst them all. They are extraordinary well

reported of by their neighbours, viz. that they are very liberal to the poor; at great cost in preparing physic and surgery, for the sick and sore (whom they visit often). . . . I find them full of humanity and humility. And others speak as much of their charity: which also I verily believe. And therefore am far from censuring them: of whom I think much better than myself.'

So the 'meritorious vanished man' went his way, leaving us a living picture of that bright circle of saintly souls, into which death was so soon to cleave the first gap.

The fame of the 'Protestant Nunnery' had ere this reached the Court, and on May 13, 1633, the King himself paid it a visit on his way to Scotland.

'The family, having notice, met his Majesty at the extremity of the parish, at a place called from this event, the King's Close: and in the form of their solemn processions conducted him to their church, which he viewed with great pleasure. He inquired into, and was informed of the particulars of their public, and domestic economy: but it does not appear that at this time he made any considerable stay.'

In the following summer the King, who was staying at Apethorpe, about twelve miles distant from Gidding, sent over to request the loan of one of the Concordances for a few days. Nicholas Ferrar was absent in London at the time, and the family

hesitated to let the book go, but the messenger was urgent, and they yielded. Some months after it was returned, annotated in the King's own hand, with a handsome acknowledgment of error in one place; and, said the messenger, 'I am expressly commanded by my master, earnestly to request of you, Mr. Nicholas Ferrar, and of the young ladies, that you would make him one of these books for his own use, and if you will please to undertake it, his Majesty says you will do him a most acceptable service.' The work was immediately put in hand, and completed in a year's time, and dispatched to the King — a noble volume, bound entirely by Mary Collett, in crimson velvet with designs in gilt, which is now to be seen in the British Museum, presented thereto by a degenerate successor. The King was highly gratified, as well he might be, and expressed himself accordingly to Laud and Cosin, who were in attendance. 'Indeed,' he continued—

'I have another request to make to them, and it is this. I often read over the lives and actions of the kings of Judah and Israel in the books of the Kings, and the Chronicles, and I frequently meet with difficulties. I should be much obliged if Mr. Ferrar would make me such a book as may bring all these matters into one regular narration, that I may read the whole in one continued story, and yet at the same time be able to see them separate; or what belongs to one book, and what to another. Will you, my lord, apply for me to Mr. Ferrar?'

This the archbishop did, and the work was completed and delivered to the King, bound 'in purple velvet most richly gilt,' by John Ferrar about October 1637. The King was delighted, and said so freely. His intention was to have the book printed, but the unsettlement of the time prevented this.

In 1633 old Mrs. Ferrar, as Lady of the Manor, had made formal restoration to the benefice of Little Gidding of certain lands that once formed part of the glebe and had somehow become alienated. The formalities were completed by a communication to the bishop of the diocese in September 1633, and the bishop 'commended her freewill offering to God, and confirmed it.' As a practical man and the friend of the family Bishop Williams determined also to make some public acknowledgment and incidentally 'to give them reputation against all detraction.' 'Therefore,' says Hacket, 'in the spring that came after (1634), he gave them warning on what Sunday he would preach in their church, whither an extreme press of people resorted from all the towns that heard of it.' His sermon insisted upon the need of dying to this world if we would attain the life everlasting, all tending 'to approve the dutiful and severe life of the Ferrars, and of the church that was in their house.' Their friend Dr. Towers, the Dean of Peterborough (the bishop of which see was Ferrar's old friend and tutor, Dr. Lindsel), sent over the cathedral choir for the occasion; and in the afternoon Bishop Williams held a confirmation for the neighbourhood. Between the services he

dined with the Ferrars, 'but they were so strict to keep that day holy,' says Hacket, 'that they left not a servant at home to provide for the table. Yet it was handsomely furnished with that which was boiled, and baked, that required no attendance, to stay any one from church to look to it.' Again the bishop inspected the establishment and inquired into its working, and 'bade them proceed in the name of God, and gave them his blessing at his departing.' Their public vindication was, in short, as complete as he could make it.

It must have been soon after these festivities, if they can be so called, and Lenton's visit, that old Mrs. Ferrar was taken with her last illness, for early in May we learn that she was dead. John Ferrar's tribute to his mother is full and filial:

'Though of so great age, at her dying day, she had no infirmity, and scarce any sign of age upon her. Her hearing, sight, and all her senses were good. She had never lost a tooth; she walked very upright, and with great agility. Nor was she troubled with any pains or uneasiness of body. While she lived at Gidding she rose, summer and winter, at five o'clock, and sometimes sooner. In her person she was of a comely presence, and had a countenance so full of gravity that it drew respect from all who beheld her. In her words she was courteous, in her actions obliging. In her diet always very temperate; saying she did not live to eat, but ate and drank to live. She was a pattern of piety, benevolence, and charity. And thus she

lived and died, esteemed, revered, and beloved of all who knew her.'

Briefer, perhaps, but hardly less forcible was the testimony of her husband on his death-bed, fourteen years previously, when she managed the great house in St. Sythe's Lane:

'I must give my wife this testimonial, that never, I think, man had the like in all kinds; and these forty-five years we have lived together, I must say of her, she never gave me cause to be angry with her; so wise and good she is. You all know I was by nature (which God pardon) both quick, and choleric, and hasty, which she also will forgive.'

And Barnabas Oley wrote of her in his verses prefixed to Lessius:

'I can tell thee where  
Full eighty years stand upright, look as clear  
As some eighteens: a glass they do not use  
To see, or to be seen in; they refuse  
Such mediums, because they strictly keep  
The golden mean in meat, in drink, in sleep.  
They hear well twice; and when themselves do talk,  
Make others do so once: *sans* staff they walk,  
Because they rise from table so; they take  
But little physick, save what cooks do make;  
And part of that is given to the poor.  
Blest physick, that does good thrown out of door;  
Thou 'lt scarce believe, at once to show thy eyes  
So many years, so few infirmities.'

We can add nothing to these fervent tributes. But to the household a perpetual memory of her must have been the tablet set up at her instiga-

tion, after consultation with George Herbert and others, which hung in the 'fair spacious parlour':—

I. B. S.

HE who (by reproof of our errors, and remonstrance of that which is more perfect) seeks to make us better, is welcome as an Angel of God. And HE who (by a cheerful participation and approbation of that which is good) confirms us in the same, is welcome as a Christian Friend.

But

HE who any ways goes about to disturb us in that which is and ought to be amongst Christians (tho' it be not usual in the world) is a burden whilst he stays and shall bear his judgement, whosoever he be. And HE who faults us in absence for that which in presence he made shew to approve of, doth by a double guilt of flattery and slander violate the bands both of friendship and charity.

MARY FERRAR, *Widow*,  
 Mother of this Family,  
 and aged about fourscore years,  
 (who bids adieu to all fears and hopes of this  
 world, and only desires to serve God)  
*set up this Table*

## CHAPTER VIII

THE LAST YEARS OF NICHOLAS FERRAR  
(1635—1637)

*'O quanta qualia sunt illa sabbata,  
Quae semper celebrat superna Curia ;  
Quae fessis requies, quae merces fortibus,  
Cum erit Omnia Deus in omnibus.'*

THE years that followed sped peacefully enough at Little Gidding in the occupations which we have been describing, but exceedingly ill for the country, and no very keen power of observation was required to foresee trouble, although it could not yet appear how very grave a complexion that trouble was to take. The years 1634 and 1635 were the years of the Shipmoney, and 1636 saw Bishop Juxon's appointment as Treasurer. Laud was steadily carrying out needful reforms in the Church, especially in the direction of enforcing elementary decencies in the rendering of divine service. These included the provision of altar rails to secure the Sacramental Elements against being stolen by dogs (this repulsive incident actually happened on the Christmas Day of 1630 at Tadlow), and the altars themselves from being used as hatstands; the proper cleaning and repair of

churches and cathedrals, the wearing of surplices by the clergy, and the hundred and one comparative trifles which in their sum make the difference on such occasions between reverence and irreverence. But Puritanism was strong and unscrupulous, and Laud was not conciliatory ; whatever he did was misrepresented and distorted, and he was never at any pains to conciliate those whom he regarded—not without some justice—as fools or worse. His vigorous crusade against immorality in high life had no small share in alienating certain well-born offenders, and throwing them into the Puritan camp ; while the political doctrinaires and busybodies were perpetually at work fanning the unrest and promoting their own particular fads. Looking back after the lapse of nearly three centuries it seems as if nothing but a storm could clear the air, and that storm burst with a vengeance.

But although there were some, and among them, as we shall see, Nicholas Ferrar, who could read the signs of the times with clearness, it is evident that the majority could not. Long years afterwards Barnabas Oley, who was assuredly no fool, looked back upon what seemed to him these happy and prosperous years.

‘What a halcyonian calm, a blessed time of peace, this Church of England had for many years, above all the churches in the world beside, when the King, St. Charles of blessed memory, and the good Archbishop of Canterbury, with others, were endeavouring to perfect

the clergy in regularity of life, uniformity of officiating, and all variety of learning!'

Another shrewd observer, well situated for forming a judgment, was no less at fault. For it was of these 'halcyonian years' that Sir Richard Fanshawe wrote in lines of haunting loveliness, to be tragically and cruelly falsified:

'Only the island which we sow  
(A world without the world) so far  
From present wounds, it cannot show  
An ancient scar.

White Peace, the beautifull'st of things,  
Seems here her everlasting rest  
To fix, and spread her downy wings  
Over the nest.

As when great Jove's usurping reign  
From the plagued world did her exile,  
And tied her with a golden chain  
To one blest isle;

Which in a sea of plenty swam,  
And turtles sang on every bough ;  
A safe retreat to all that came  
As ours is now.'

Nicholas Ferrar had himself, however, belonged to the 'country party,' and had braved Royal displeasure on behalf of the liberties of the country. Probably he had seen in time the direction which the professedly patriotic sentiment was taking, and had found, like Falkland, whose Churchman-

ship was of a much less robust type, to what lengths of irreligion and bad faith the 'patriots' were prepared to go. Indeed, if we may anticipate the history of the next few years, the attitude of Lord Falkland was among the most instructive indications of the real meaning and spirit of Puritanism. Falkland was among the bitterest of Erastians, and denounced the bishops in words which have lost none of their vitriolic force with the lapse of time. 'They were endeavouring,' he said, 'to bring in an English, though not a Roman Popery, and have opposed the Papacy beyond the seas that they might settle one beyond the water. Nay,' he continued—

'common fame is more than ordinarily false if none of them have found a way to reconcile the opinions of Rome to the preferments of England, and to be so absolutely, directly, and cordially Papists, that it is all that fifteen hundred pound a year can do to keep them from confessing it.'

He railed against the bishops as an order 'whose proper and natural motion was towards our ruin and destruction.' 'Bishops may be good men,' he admitted grudgingly, but they needed good rules—proper Parliamentary restraint, in fact—under which, he observed, 'I am as confident that they will not dare either ordain, suspend, silence, excommunicate, or deprive otherwise than we would have them.' Falkland only took this line in public, however (in the debate upon the resolution of 1640, that the bishops should be deprived of all

legislative and judicial power), upon receiving an assurance from Hampden, the Puritan leader, that nothing further should be attempted against the Church. But the Lords had hardly thrown out the resolution in question, than the Puritan party brought in, with Hampden's active support, what was known as the 'Root and Branch Bill,' abolishing all ecclesiastical dignities whatever. Falkland's principles still included the obligations of truth and honour, and he decided forthwith that men who could so break faith were no associates for him. Judging Puritanism by its fruits, henceforth he supported the Church and threw in his lot with the King.

Ferrar made frequent visits to his old friend Bishop Williams at Buckden, where, in the intervals of the clash of keen and cultivated wits, they must often and anxiously have discussed the situation. Williams has been freely abused, but it is impossible not to credit him with much that was sterling and lovable, if only for his treatment of the Ferrars. He could easily have won a cheap popularity at the hands of the Puritans by throwing the Ferrars to the wolves, and the more so that their tendencies in religion were distinctly not, if surface indications went for anything, those associated with himself. But he saw below the surface to the core of the matter, and supported them loyally and to his own disadvantage. It was nothing short of deplorable that unkind fate should have thrown into an attitude of mutual opposition at that critical time such good men and sound Churchmen as Laud and Williams, who

could find common ground of sympathy and approval in an ascetic recluse like Nicholas Ferrar. One is the more glad to find a recent writer, Dr. Bigg, doing something like justice to the bishop:

‘John Williams was a very remarkable man. He is the last instance except Juxon of an ecclesiastic placed in high secular employment. He was a Welshman, of good family, and handsome person, widely read, not only in theology, but in history, fond of music, sociable and magnificent in his habits, what we may call a Whig in politics, and in religion rather a Puritan of the school of Jewel, Whitgift, and Usher. He was far more a man of the world than Laud; but no one who reads Hacket’s *Life* will doubt that he was religious, or that he had high principles.’

These years saw Williams in the thick of the Altar controversy, regarding which we need only note that Ferrar, whose views were in all probability opposed to those of Williams, thought it right to obey his diocesan on this thorny point, while Williams, for his part, acted like a noble gentleman, and refused to abandon Ferrar to the common enemy. In return Ferrar stood loyally by his old friend, when his foes prevailing against him procured his imprisonment for three years in the Tower, to which he was committed in July 1637. There Ferrar visited and conversed with him on the troubled outlook, venturing upon something

like prophecy in regard to Williams's future, and leaving upon his friend the impression of one who was 'fey'—marked down for early departure from this world. Their conversation was prolonged, and Ferrar said plainly that he was come to take his last leave. Not long after the death of Nicholas Ferrar, his brother, John, went to London and visited the bishop in the Tower, and told him of Nicholas's good end, when the bishop observed :

‘Your brother at his parting made me much to wonder, for he said to me, I should come out of this place, and rise to greater dignity, but the times would be dangerous. I thought, when he was gone, the more upon them as from a dying man's words, and of another world, for so he seemed to me, and I feared I never should see him again.’

Williams did, as we know, afterwards rise to high dignity, becoming ere long Archbishop of York, but he never forgot the Gidding community, and gave more than one substantial evidence of his goodwill in the stormy times that were now upon them.

As the year went on, whether from failing health or from other causes, Nicholas Ferrar seems to have had clear monitions of his coming end. His austerities, which, towards the end of his mother's lifetime he had slightly relaxed to spare her anxiety, were now redoubled, and one can hardly avoid the conclusion that these austerities hastened his end.

‘While his mother was yet living, Mr. Ferrar did so far comply with her request, that he went to bed, or lay down upon it, from nine in the evening till one in the morning, which was his constant hour of rising to his devotions. But after her death he never did either: but wrapping himself in a loose frieze gown, slept on a bear’s skin upon the boards. He also watched either in the oratory, or in the church three nights in the week.’

According to another account he seldom went to bed more than once a week during these latter years; ‘all the while,’ his biographer would have us believe, ‘his health was rather improving than impairing in the midst of his austerities,’ but the undoubted fact of his early death must make the plain man sceptical.

His forebodings of evil took practical shape about a year before his death, when he urged his brother to grant to certain tenants on the estate leases for fifteen years at the old rent. John Ferrar was strongly against long leases for business reasons, but ultimately consented to leases for ten years upon Nicholas’s representation. ‘I pray you be content,’ said Nicholas to the tenants, telling them that ten years ‘would be time long enough, for he doubted troublesome times were coming on, they might all have cause to thank God, if they could enjoy things in quiet so long, which he doubted.’ To his brother he spoke in yet greater fulness a few weeks before his death:

'I now tell you, that you may be forewarned and prepare for it, there will be sad times come, and very sad; you will live to see them, but be courageous, and hold you fast to God with humility and patience, rely upon His mercy and power; you will suffer much, but God will help you; and endeavour will be made to turn you out of the right way, the good way you are in, even by those whom you least think of, and your troubles will be many; but be you steadfast, and call upon God, and He in His good and due time will help you. Ah, my brother, my brother, I pity you, I pity your case and what you may live to see, even great alterations. God will bring punishments upon this land, but, I trust, not to the utter ruin of it. But if you should live to see the divine service and worship of God by supreme authority brought to nought and suppressed, then look and fear that desolation is at hand, and cry mightily to God.'

How literally that prophecy was fulfilled is now common knowledge, though the facts are more widely forgotten or ignored among Churchmen than is wise or even prudent in view of the menacing political portents of our own day.

About a month after the visit to Williams Ferrar broke off abruptly a work upon which he was engaged, to commence some *Contemplations on Death*, a subject evidently suggested by his own circumstances. 'The day will come,' he wrote 'and he knoweth not how soon, when he shall be laid on a sick bed, weak and faint, without ease

and almost without strength, encompassed with melancholy thoughts, and overwhelmed with anguish'—

'when on one side, his distemper increasing upon him, the physician tells him that he is past all hope of life, . . . when again the priest calls on him to take the preparatory measures for his departure: when he himself begins to be assured that here he hath no abiding city: that this is no longer a world for him: that no more suns will rise and set upon him: that for him there will be no more seeing, no more hearing, no more speaking, no more touching, no more tasting, no more fancying, no more understanding, no more remembering, no more desiring, no more loving, no more delights of any sort to be enjoyed by him; but that death will at one stroke deprive him of all these things . . . let any man duly and daily ponder these things, and how can it be that he should dare—'

And here, appropriately enough, the pen fell from his hands, never to be resumed for the purposes of literary composition. On the second of November he officiated in church for the last time, and thence-forward, taking to his bed, he faded painlessly from the world. In all former sicknesses, he said, he had ever had a strong desire to live, but now he did not care to beg longer life of God; nay, he rather desired to be dissolved and to be with Christ. Three days before his death he sent for the family, and in their presence gave directions

for the choice of a site for his grave; it was to be seven feet west of the west door of the church, leaving the intervening space for the future burial-place of John, as the elder brother—‘God, I hope, will let you there take up your resting-place, till we all rise again in joy.’

Next he desired the destruction of his library of secular literature. Bishop Turner thus tells the story of the incident:

‘When his brother returned, saying it was done as he desired; “then go,” he added, “and remove from my study those three large hampers full of books, that stand there locked up these many years. They are comedies, tragedies, heroic poems, and romances: let them be carried to the place marked out for my grave, and there, upon it, see you burn them all immediately.” And this he uttered with some vehemence and indignation, adding, “Go, brother; let it be done, let it be done; and then come again all of you to me.” . . . His orders were obeyed. The vain things which once had charmed him, were sacrificed over the spot which was to receive his mortal remains; and the smoke and flame of this holocaust, as they flared from the eminence on which the house and church stood, excited the attention and alarm of the neighbourhood, and drew together very many persons, who imagined a destructive fire was happening at Gidding. . . . Within a few days the report of this transaction had assumed another feature, and it was currently asserted in the market

towns that he would not die in peace until he had burned all his books of magic and conjuration. . . . When his brother returned and assured him that they were all burnt, he sat up in his bed, and poured out his soul in hearty thanksgivings to Almighty God.'

It is difficult not to recognise in this the attraction of the scholar for all that was beautiful in culture, struggling with the ascetic spirit which would condemn out of hand whatever did not march on all-fours with the letter of his creed and practice. The struggle must have been one of many years' standing, otherwise these books, the mementoes of distant travel and pleasant hours of reading and study, would have been destroyed long since. Hence, no doubt, the indignation and vehemence which his brother records, and the fervent thanksgiving for a last temptation overcome. A man can but follow the light as he sees it, and the severity of the struggle in the case of Nicholas Ferrar must be the measure of our admiration for his action, without staying to weigh too closely the need or expediency of it.

As the end approached his friends came from far and near to pray and speak with him as he lay on the pallet-bed on the floor, to which he had insisted upon being removed. He had arranged for the daily duty at Little Gidding to be taken by his friend Luke Groose, the vicar of Great Gidding, and to him, on Advent Sunday, December 1, 1637, he made a solemn confession of faith, preparatory to receiving at his hands absolution

and the Holy Communion for the last time. Throughout his sickness he was always ready to comfort and advise the family, earnestly exhorting them to continue in the doctrine of the Church of England and in the good old way, and to carry on their work and rule of life at Little Gidding. 'Leave not the thought of them,' he said, 'though I be gone.' He bade the children 'keep in heart diligently their psalms and concordances, that then God would love them, and no good thing that was good for them should they want.' Especially he noticed young Nicholas, the brilliant nephew to whom he looked ultimately to take over and carry on his work; and the girl Virginia, so named in loving memory of the colony which was so dear to them all, whose abilities and goodness of heart had already given them cause to be proud of her. Anything approaching excessive grief for himself and his departure he deprecated, almost with passion, even when his brother was the offender. His nieces, Mary and Anna Collett, he exhorted constantly to continue in their vows. As that long Sunday night wore on he asked that the ministers present might say the prayer for a dying man. Then—

'he, on a sudden, casting his hands out of the bed with great strength, with a strong voice and cheerful, said: "Oh, what a blessed change is here! What do I see? O let us come and sing unto the Lord, sing praises to the Lord and magnify His Holy Name together. I have been at a great feast, the Great King's feast." . . . The

ministers went again presently to prayers, and after a while they said that prayer again, that God would be pleased to send His angels to carry his soul to heaven, all kneeling about his pallet. While these words were saying, he opened his lips and gave one gasp, and so, not once moving or stirring hand, foot, or eyes, he rendered up his soul. . . . And at that instant the clock struck one, the hour that he constantly rose up every morning to praise God and to pray unto Him. He ended the Sabbath here upon earth to begin the everlasting Sabbath in heaven.'

Thus departed Nicholas Ferrar to his long home. All that was mortal of him was laid to rest a few days later in the place which he had selected at the west end of the church, and the funeral sermon was preached by his old friend and kinsman by marriage, Robert Mapletoft, afterwards Dean of Ely. An altar tomb still marks his place of sepulture, void to all appearance of inscription, though it is probable that a copy of what was once inscribed upon it has recently been discovered. But his memory is imperishable, and will continue as long as the Anglican Church endures and its sons and daughters are proud of those who made and strengthened it into what it has since become.

To sum up in a few words the character of so many-sided a man is difficult, perhaps impossible. Peckard describes him in his personal aspect in a few telling phrases:

'Eminently pious towards God, benevolent

towards man, and perfectly sincere in his dealings : that he was industrious beyond his strength, and indefatigable in what he thought his duty : that he was blessed by Providence with uncommon abilities; and by unremitting exertion of his various talents attained many valuable accomplishments, is very manifest. . . . But the spiritual exaltation of mind by which he rose above all earthly considerations of advantage, and devoted himself to God, whom in the strictest sense he loved with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his strength, being united to the active virtues of a citizen of the world, gives him a peculiar pre-eminence.'

Scholar, traveller, man of the world, statesman—in all these capacities he had made his mark amid a galaxy of distinguished men in a distinguished age, and when he finally adopted the life of his earliest choice, a life of self-devotion which should revive in the Church of England the best and essential features of the monastic and ascetic ideal, he did so to such purpose as to regain definitely for that Church a rightful heritage of which it had been in grievous peril of permanently losing. Again, in the passionate attachment of such men as George Herbert and Nicholas Ferrar to the Anglican Liturgy we recognise what must have been, through their influence and example, a potent factor in retaining that Liturgy unchanged in its essential features, when in 1662 was waged the final battle as to whether the Church should or should not abdicate her Catholic

position. The lofty spirituality of Herbert and Ferrar, the strenuous life and martyrdom of Laud and the King (in regard to the last-named the fact that he gave his life for the preservation of the Church is no longer disputed by serious historians), the sufferings of the clergy who through the troublous years of the Puritan domination kept alive the lamp of the national Faith—all these laid broad and deep the foundations that uphold the fabric of the Anglican Church as we have inherited it, and it will be an evil day when her children forget that fact. And if we see among us now the religious life in full and increasing vigour, and the rank and file of the Church realising more clearly every day that the one road to unity lies in the loyal adherence to her liturgy and teaching, there are few to whom, under God, that result is more directly traceable than to Nicholas Ferrar.

On the other hand, it is well to realise that while Ferrar was in all essentials a sound Catholic Churchman of the Anglican type, and that while he had given the best evidence of his adherence to Catholic tradition in boldly reviving the retired or 'religious' life in a communion which had discarded it for close upon a century, he did not attach importance to details of ceremonial and practice which have since, largely by the accident of circumstances, become storm-centres of serious and determined controversy. Laud did well, as we know, to restore reverent attention to detail in the care and arrangement of churches which had long fallen into a condition of scandalous neglect, and to insist upon uniformity of vesture and

liturgical observance on the part of the ministering clergy. Of this no one could have approved more heartily than Ferrar, as his own practice showed; but the same principle led him to yield obedience to his own diocesan in the vexed controversy regarding the position of the altar, realising as he did that so long as the doctrine of the Eucharist was not impugned, the position of the altar was comparatively unimportant. His dislike of Rome and its works was strong, almost, as it seems to us, to the point of excess; but we have to remember that he belonged to a generation whose near friends and kinsfolk had suffered for their beliefs in the Marian persecution, and that people in such circumstances may be pardoned for being prejudiced and illogical in respect of the quarrel still on hand. Ferrar himself was nearly related, as we have seen, to the first Anglican bishop who was burned for his faith in those dark days, and he was brought up on Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*—the *Acta Sanctorum* of its confessors—which created impressions that the subsequent conduct of Rome and its followers had so far done little to soften. It is to feelings of this kind that we must refer his vehement denunciation of the Pope as Anti-Christ, and his declaration that he would pull down and rebuild any room of his in which the Mass had been celebrated. Industrious libellers of the Puritan faction spread stories of twelve crosses in the chancel window, but inquiry showed that the thing reduced itself to a quibble, and that when Dr. Morison, the bishop's chancellor, had suggested to him that all that the east window

required was 'painted glass and in it a crucifix,' Ferrar had treated it as a matter of indifference unless it were commanded by authority. But to Puritanism and all its works, its irreverence, its selfish and cruel individualism, its disregard for authority in the abstract and for truth and charity in conduct, he was vigorously opposed. 'No man,' says his biographer, 'was better pleased with a decent splendour in the House of God, nor was more elevated with our solemn service performed with very good and grave cathedral music, of which his travels into Italy made him a perfect judge.' 'His chiefe aim,' says Barnabas Oley, 'was to win those that disliked our Liturgy, Catechisme, etc., by the constant, reverent, and holy use of them.' In regard to the favourite Puritan practice of extempore prayer, he rather grimly observed on one occasion that all that was needed to cure a man of it was to take such a prayer down verbatim and to show it to the author afterwards. He did not disdain to use the name of 'Protestant,' which had not then been dragged in the mud as it has since, and still connoted a living protest upon a matter of vital import. But before and above all he was a Catholic Churchman of the best and simplest type, a shining example to Anglicans for all time.

## CHAPTER IX

SOME TROUBLED YEARS  
(1638—1640)

*'Hora novissima, tempora pessima sunt, vigilemus !  
Ecce ! minaciter imminet Arbiter ille supremus.'*

THE way of life at Gidding was maintained with little change after the death of Nicholas Ferrar, as he would have wished. What provision was made for the services in the little church does not appear; perhaps they were performed by David Stevenson, who is recorded as rector from 1625 to 1651, though there is no other reference to him as taking any active part in connection with the church, either during the lifetime of Nicholas Ferrar or after it. Luke Groose, the faithful friend and ally of the Ferrars, was left undisturbed in his cure at Great Gidding throughout the Civil War and the subsequent troubles, and only died about 1666, so that he may well have aided them in continuing the round of services until Ferrar Collett became rector of Little Gidding in 1659. We have already seen this Ferrar Collett sharing his uncle's vigils, and his other uncle, John Ferrar, speaks of him as 'a cowardly youth,' while his university career, culminating in

a fellowship at Peterhouse, from which he was ejected by the Puritans in 1646, was not undistinguished. He is last heard of as taking his B.D. degree in 1672, having vacated the rectory of Little Gidding in 1664. The translation of Valdesso, which Nicholas Ferrar had completed some time before his death, and to which George Herbert had contributed a preface and some criticisms, was published in 1638, as already noted. A copy of the *Divine Considerations*, in a French version, dated 1563, once the property of Bishop Linsel, was presented to the Bodleian by John Ferrar in 1642. The work of compiling Harmonies, of book-binding, and such-like went on uninterrupted, as Nicholas Ferrar had desired, and to all appearance nothing was to be apprehended by a community which desired only to live in charity with and unobserved of all men, and to give themselves up to doing good and useful work.

More prominent among them year by year was Nicholas Ferrar the younger, 'whom his uncle entirely loved, not permitting him to be any where brought up but at Gidding, and under his own eye,' the brilliant son of John Ferrar, whose abilities, even at this distance of time, are seen to have been prodigious. This had been recognised by his famous uncle, who confidently looked to his nephew as the natural successor to the headship and work of the community which he had founded. Born in 1620, the lad was already a linguist of extraordinary attainments, although he had had no education beyond what could be provided at Little Gidding. At fourteen he had

translated a book of devotions to the satisfaction of the elder Nicholas, and at twenty he had produced a Harmony of the New Testament in no less than twenty-four languages, each given in its own script, besides a Gospel of St. John in as many languages as it had chapters (twenty-one), and other notable works of the same kind. Among his papers were afterwards found sketched out ambitious schemes for other works on these lines. But the bright hopes so confidently cherished on his behalf were destined to be unfulfilled, and he was called away, as it seemed, untimely, in the spring of 1640. Of the circumstances of his end we have a graphic account in a manuscript by John Ferrar, probably written about 1653, which is still to be seen in the library of Lambeth Palace.

In the autumn of 1637, as we have seen, a Harmony of the Books of Kings and Chronicles, prepared at the instance of the King, had been taken up to London by John Ferrar, and had been received with many gracious expressions of the royal approval. Subsequently, after the death of Nicholas Ferrar the elder, word was received at Gidding that the Prince, having seen the books made for his father, had desired that something similar should be executed for himself, the King having said of his own volume that 'he might not part with that rich jewel, for he daily made use of it.' Upon this hint the younger Nicholas, taking counsel of 'his beloved kinswomen, that were the handiwork mistresses of the former works, . . . they laying their heads together, thought a concordance of four several languages would be most

useful, and beneficial, and pleasant to the young prince's disposition,' and this they proceeded to compile with their usual care and finish, under the title of *Monotessaron*. It is described as a handsome volume, two feet high, bound in green velvet, stamped with *fleurs-de-lis*, and is now in the possession of the Earl of Normanton. At the same time young Ferrar completed four other works to be presented to the King, perhaps with a view to getting them printed: the Holy Gospels in eight languages, the Holy Gospels in twenty-four languages, the Gospel of St. John in twenty-one languages, and the Acts of the Apostles and the Revelation of St. John. The last-named is still in the British Museum, but its three fellows have been lost. The workmanship was of the best, and the books were much admired by some Cambridge scholars to whom they were shown on their way to London, whither young Nicholas Ferrar carried them towards the end of March 1639-40.

Of this visit to London we have full details from the pen of his father, who accompanied him. Addressing themselves to Laud, the Archbishop of Canterbury, they were cordially received and highly complimented upon the excellence of the work. They were bidden to attend the King on the following afternoon, which was Maundy Thursday, April 2. Coming to Whitehall at the time appointed they were introduced to the King, who spoke graciously to them, and gave the formal permission which was asked to present the large volume to the Prince. 'Better things,'

said he, 'a prince cannot desire, nor the world recommend unto him.' With the works prepared for himself the King was greatly pleased and astonished, as well he might be. The Testament in twenty-four languages he pronounced to be 'the emperor of all books,' 'the crown of all works,' 'an admirable masterpiece,' and marvelled how a youth of twenty-one should have mastered more languages than he had years. The following day was appointed for his audience of the Prince, and after more compliments from the King and his courtiers he withdrew, the King dismissing him 'with a cheerful royal look.' At Richmond, whither he was borne in a coach and four on the following day, Good Friday, his reception was no less flattering, and the little Duke of York exacted a promise that the ladies of Gidding would make him another such book without loss of time; but a marginal note in the manuscripts runs sadly: 'The book which was made and printed for the duke never had opportunity to be presented to his grace. It is yet still at Gidding.' There is reason to suppose that this volume is the one now in possession of the Marquis of Salisbury at Hatfield, though how it got there cannot be said with certainty. It has certainly been in the Cecil family since 1704. After many compliments from the Prince, he was carried off to dine with the young nobles who formed the Prince's court—a strange predicament for a son of Gidding to find himself in on a Good Friday—and at his departure the Prince uttered yet more kindly words, and desired his thanks to the ladies of Gidding, 'who have taken such pains about it,

to make it so curious a piece.' On the following morning the father and son reported themselves to Laud, and told him how they had fared with the Prince; and Laud, taking John Ferrar aside, informed him that the King had determined to make his son's future his own care, and suggested that he should at once be sent to Oxford to be maintained at the King's charge. The archbishop blessed the lad at parting in words which meant more than he knew: 'God will provide for you better than your father can. God bless you! and keep you!' 'So they parted from his grace.'

The rest of the story is best told in John Ferrar's own words, necessarily abbreviated:

'But he never saw him more; for within a few days Nicholas Ferrar fell ill: and on Easter day he was desirous to receive the Communion at Paul's, whither he went early in the morning and communicated; and returning home, had little appetite to his dinner, eating little or nothing. He went yet to a sermon in the afternoon; but at night grew somewhat worse. And on Monday morning, his father with all care and diligence went to a learned physician, who came and visited him, and gave him what he thought fitting; but he grew worse and worse. Then was another physician joined to the first. They consulted, and prescribed things for him, but he mended not; but with great patience and cheerfulness, did bear his sickness, and was very comfortable in it to all that came to visit him, wholly referring himself to God's

good will and pleasure; only telling his friends, the Bishop of Peterborough, doctor Towers, that loved him dearly, and came to visit him twice in that short time, that he was in no way troubled to die, and to go to heaven, where he knew was only peace and quiet joys permanent, whereas all things in the world were but trouble and vexation: and death must be the end of all men; and he that went soonest to heaven, was the happiest man. The Bishop would say, when he went away, and had a long time talked with him, that Nicholas Ferrar was better prepared to die than he, and was a true child of God, too good longer to stay here. "He is too good," said he, "to live longer in these ill approaching times. For there is much fear now that the glory of Church and State is at the highest."

The bishop's apprehensions were well founded. The Short Parliament was then sitting, but refusing obdurately to grant supplies for putting pressure upon the recalcitrant Scots, it was summarily dissolved by the King on May 6 after a session of three weeks, and serious popular tumults followed. John Ferrar notes that 'the Bishop of Canterbury's house at Lambeth was one night assaulted by a rabble of lewd people' (this was on May 11), and young Nicholas, when he was told of it, mournfully recalled his uncle's prophecy. 'Alas! Alas!' said he, 'God help His Church and poor England! I now fear indeed, what my dear uncle said before he died, is at hand, that evil days were coming, and happy

were they that went to heaven before they came. God amend all! Truly, truly, it troubles me.' When asked by a friend whether he was not grieved to leave this world in the flower of his youth and hopes, he expressed himself as resigned. 'No, truly; I leave all to God's good will and pleasure, that is my best father, and knoweth what is best for me. If I live, I desire it may be to His further glory, and mine own soul's good, and the comfort and service, that I intend to be to my father, that loves me so dearly, and in his old age to be his servant.' Two days before he died the bishop 'found him most cheerful to die,' and gave him absolution. 'Be of good comfort,' he said to the sorrowing father, 'you give him but again to Him, that gave him you for a season.'

'And in two days after, God took him away; who died praying and calling upon God, "Lord Jesus receive my soul! Lord receive it!" Amen.'

Thus, on May 19, he passed to his long home, and never saw Little Gidding and his friends again. Where he was buried does not appear, but a long and elaborate epitaph, indited by a friend of his, Mark Frank, fellow of Pembroke, is still extant, somewhat resembling that believed to have been on his uncle's altar-tomb at Gidding, but lengthier and more fanciful, and consequently less effective.

The best panacea for all trouble is work, and at Little Gidding work never slackened. More than one specimen of Gidding handiwork is dated in this year, 1640, prominent among them the Har-

mony of the Four Gospels now in possession of the Marquis of Bristol at Ickworth, inscribed on the title page 'Done at Little Gidding, A.D. 1640, by Virginia Ferrar, age 12.' She was the daughter of John Ferrar, born on the Christmas Eve of 1627, the year after the family settled at Little Gidding, and was called after the colony in which the hopes of the family had been centred, and in whose fortunes they still retained an undiminished interest. Of Virginia Ferrar we shall have more to say later. At this point we need only notice that she grew up to supply, so far as a daughter could do so, the place which her brother Nicholas would have taken in his father's work and affections. Another *Harmony* is dated in this year, which is in possession of Colonel Garrat, of Bishop's Court, Exeter; and a volume of 'The Five Books of Moses,' illustrated and handsomely bound in purple velvet, was made and presented in this year to Archbishop Laud, and by him subsequently deposited in the library of St. John's College, Oxford, where it is still to be seen. Another great volume which must have been put in hand about this time was the copy of the *Pentateuch*, which was still being prepared for the use of Prince Charles when the King and his train visited Gidding two years later. Mr. J. E. Acland thus describes the volume, which is probably identical with that now in the possession of Captain Gausseen, of Brookman's Park, near Hatfield:

'The writer can vouch for the fact that it is quite as much as one man can do to carry it

comfortably across a room. It is magnificently bound in purple velvet, with the usual gilt stamping, chiefly in patterns made of small crowns. The measurements are 2' 5" by 1' 8", and there are nearly 450 pages of the thickest paper, besides which every page is profusely illustrated by the pasting on of engravings. . . . The first part deals with "the whole law of God as it is delivered in the five Books of Moses," methodically distributed into three great classes—moral, ceremonial, and political—and each of these again subdivided into several heads, etc. There follows an "harmonical parallel between the types of the Old Testament and the Four Evangelists' relations of our Lord and Saviour"; also a "discourse of the estate of the Jews," by Dr. Jackson, "The destruction of Jerusalem," and long extracts from a work entitled "Moses Unveiled," besides other matter.'

No wonder that one of the King's party called it 'the gallantest great book in the world.' One would like to know more certainly of the vicissitudes which it underwent from the day when John Ferrar wrote of it: 'This book hath been preserved at Gidding, and attends the happy hour to be delivered into the right owner's hands,' until it was 'found walled up in a cupboard at the house now belonging to Captain Gausseen,' something like a hundred years since.

The political horizon became steadily more overcast, and several of the bishops, including Towers, the old friend of the Ferrars, were imprisoned for

protesting against their forcible exclusion from the House of Lords, while the anti-Church faction became daily more clamorous in the Lower House. But some time in the autumn their own diocesan, Williams, was released from his three years' imprisonment in the Tower, and started upon a visitation in October, after doing his best for the cause of the Church at Westminster, 'remaining alone of all the bishops; a stout defender of his order and discipline; not without the envy and broad censures of the people.' So writes Dr. Busby to Isaac Basire. 'Pray for the Church,' he continued, 'as it concerns us all.' A month later the Long Parliament met, and the year closed gloomily with the impeachments of Strafford and Laud. It must have been about this time that their kindly diocesan, after a stormy journey through other portions of his vast charge, found his way again to his *protégés* at Gidding—

'and seeing the inscription in the parlour, said to Mr. John Ferrar, "I would advise you to take this table down. You see the times grow high and turbulent, and no one knows where the rage and madness of the people may end. I am just come from Boston, where I was used very coarsely. I do not speak as by authority, I only advise you as a friend, for fear of offence or worse consequences." Then after sincerely condoling with them on their irreparable misfortune in the death of Nicholas Ferrar, he bade them his final farewell. But ever after he continued their firm friend, and constantly vindicated

them from the many slanders of their false accusers.'

It must have been upon this occasion that the bishop delivered his modified ruling upon the case of Mary and Anna Collett, the two ladies who desired to take formal vows of virginity. Formerly, according to Hacket, he had 'admonished them very fatherly, that they knew not what they were about. That they had no promise to confirm that grace unto them; that this readiness, which they had in the present, should be in their will, without repentance, to their life's end. Let the younger women marry, was the best advice.' He had drawn up his judgment in writing, and Hacket adds that 'one of the gentlewomen afterwards took a liking to a good husband, and was well bestowed,' a statement not in accord with fact. But the bishop's words were not ineffectual, for we read that—

'when their reverend diocesan had declared himself, without anybody's seeking to him, ready to accept a vow (not absolute and unconditional, as it were in spite of heaven and hell, but) a vow of sincere endeavour, if God should continue to them grace, in a single state to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil, the foremost of them all in any of their generous and religious undertakings [Mary Collett] was not forward to take any such engagement upon her, but kept the middle way betwixt vow-ing and slackness, arriving at that which St. Paul

calls stedfastness of heart and power over her own will.'

Perhaps it was this visit, too, that inspired Hacket's enthusiastic panegyric, too long to be quoted at full length, though it gives a just and admirable impression of the community as it must have appeared to observers from without who were free of evil or fanatical prejudice. 'The whole land,' he said, 'was the better for their sanctity. They fasted that famine might not be inflicted upon our common gluttony. They abridged themselves of all pleasures, that vengeance might not come down upon the voluptuousness of this riotous age. They kept their vigils all night, that the day of the Lord might not come upon us like a thief unawares, that sleep in security.' He proceeds:

'The fame of the dispensations of this worthy family, the further it was heard abroad, the more it sounded like popery. Envy or ignorance could guess no better at it, but that it was a *casa professa*, a convent packed together of some superstitious order beyond seas, or a nunnery, and that the sufferance of it looked towards a change of religion. A crew of bawds and gamesters might have set up a standing with less prejudice than these devotionaries. But God help us, if the best Protestants (for these may be called so) do look like papists. Had they been hired with gold, that so mistook them, they could not have done more credit and

honour to our adversaries. Speak, sir Censurer, we the true children of the Church of England, were we not, without departing from our own station, capable of mortification? of vowed ourselves to God? of renouncing the world? of fasting? of vigils? of prayer limited to canons, and hours, as any that say, and do not, that call themselves from St. Basil, St. Bennet, or other such institution? Not our reformation, but our slothfulness doth indispose us, that we let others run faster than we. The diocesan, and their neighbour to this family in a few miles, was ashamed at these scandals, which he knew to be spiteful and temerarious.'

But it was no time to run needless risks, in the darkness of the gathering storm, with a wave of irreligion sweeping madly over the country; 'and the old gentlewoman's tablet was taken down out of the common parlour, whereinto, indeed, not very long after, came men of another garb than the bishop, and of other minds.'

## CHAPTER X

### DARK DAYS AT LITTLE GIDDING (1641—1647)

‘They out-talk’d thee, hiss’d thee, tore thee?  
Better men fared thus before thee;  
Fired their ringing shot and pass’d,  
Hotly charged—and sank at last.’

IN the political and anti-religious storm which was now darkening the country, it was not to be expected that so conspicuously pious a community as that of Little Gidding would escape unscathed. It had been in the public eye for many years, and Puritanism had assiduously vented its malice upon the harmless inmates with its usual disregard of truth, insomuch that, as we have already seen, Nicholas Ferrar had been provoked into saying that he would rather fry a faggot than undergo this perpetual obloquy. But in the autumn of 1641 the first public attack was made upon the family in the villainous *Arminian Nunnery* pamphlet, which was circulated in thousands and presented to Parliament, and has formed an ignoble model upon which the controversial literature of Protestantism has shaped itself from that day to this. The libeller had by some means got hold of the letter written

by Edward Lenton in 1634, and by studied distortions, aided by his own evident knowledge, shaped it to the taste of himself and his friends; it was printed with a rough wood-cut, giving a rude outline of the church at Little Gidding and standing by it a woman in conventional dress holding a rosary, intended to represent one of the 'nuns.' One or two samples of his perversions of the text may be given. Lenton having written:

'Here the younger son answered with a protestation, that he did as verily believe the pope to be anti-Christ as any article in his faith. Wherewith I was satisfied and silenced, touching that point.'

The libeller varies it thus:

'therein if he spake from his heart, he much differed from the opinions of priest Shelford, priest Squire, Dr. Draffig, the red dragon of Arminians.'

Lenton had described Nicholas Ferrar as 'a batchelor of plain presence, but of able speech and parts,' while of John he wrote that he wore 'his apparel and hair so fashioned as to make him shew priest-like.' These the libeller combines into 'Now you must understand that the younger brother is a jolly, pragmaticall and Priestlike fellow'; next he becomes 'the Priestlike prolocutor,' and 'this Priestlike, deft fellow,' while further on in the pamphlet we read of—

'a fond and fantasticall family of Farrars, the Principall priest a Poly-pragmaticall Fellow, having been at Rome, and there (as it is credibly reported) he was conformable to all the abominable ceremonies and Services of the Church at Rome. . . . And for another shew that they would not be accounted Popish, they have gotten the *Booke of Martyrs* in the Chappell; but few or none are suffered to read therein.'

And again, after suppressing a passage in Lenton which mentions that the Bishop of Lincoln had expressed his approval of the Ferrar establishment, the libeller writes, 'but he said nothing of his having beene at Rome, as it is well knowne he hath beene,' thus distorting the meaning of Lenton's passage, which runs, 'To say nothing of his having been at Rome, whereof I could have excepted no more against him than he might against me.' When Lenton notes that he read the Litany in 'a loud and distinct voice,' the libeller's version runs, 'he began and trolled out the Letanie in a loud and shrill voyce.' He mentions 'their monthly receiving of the Sacrament, which this Deacon performeth and consecrateth the bread and wine'; the fact, of course, being quite otherwise: he indulges in coarse jests at 'the altered Table' and their 'private prayers from John Cozens his cozening Devotions,' and he grossly perverts a perfectly harmless passage from Lenton into the following:

'lest I might happily have light upon one of the

Virgins lippes, not knowing whether they would have taken a second kiss in good part or no.'

Lenton's warm testimony to the charity and goodness of the community to their poorer neighbours becomes: 'They take upon themselves to be physicians and Chirurgeons . . . and pretend to be very charitable to the poor, but as it is verily thought in a meritorious way.'

One would have thought that the more reputable Protestant historians would have said as little as possible about this precious production, but a passage in the late Dr. Stoughton's *Church of the Civil Wars* seems to show that he was not ashamed to cite it as an authority, when he writes of 'the famous monastery at Gidding' as provoking

'the severest animadversions of Puritan contemporaries, who wondered at nothing more than that, in a settled Church government, bishops could permit such a foundation so nearly complying with Popery.'

This passage reproduces the exact sense and much of the phraseology of the final paragraphs of the *Arminian Nunnery* pamphlet; and when one sees writers of Dr. Stoughton's standing condescending to treat such scurrilous trash as the expression of conscientious conviction, one ceases to wonder at such later developments of Protestant controversy as those which have disgraced our own generation.

Immediately upon the appearance of this pam-

phlet John Ferrar wrote to Lenton for an explanation, and Lenton replied warmly disclaiming all responsibility for it in a letter which is fortunately still extant. 'Sir,' he writes, 'I should much degenerate from my birth (being a gentleman), my breeding, and the religion I profess, if having, upon something a bold visit, been entertained in your family with kind and civil respects, I should requite it with such scorn and calumny as this libellous pamphlet seems to insinuate.' 'So to add to, subtract, pervert, and falsify my letter,' said Lenton, 'was outrageous—to have put a true copy of my letter into print, without my privity, had been a great inhumanity.' He forwards with it a copy of the letter which he actually wrote, and of the existence of which the Ferrars were fully aware. But so luscious a slander, so exactly in accord with the rising tide of Puritan ideals and opinion, could not be thus easily suppressed. The lie flew far and wide, systematically disseminated by the Puritan party, and in time, as it was intended to do, brought calamity upon its innocent victims.

Meanwhile those who were most competent to judge still gave evidence of their unabated confidence in the Ferrars and their work. Dr. Hill, the parson of Tichmersh, came over with a clerical friend and examined the place for himself, and after confessing that he had heard 'very strange reports,' observed that it would teach him a lesson not to believe so readily all that he heard. Their practice, he said, was unblamable, and they 'were much wronged by scandalous reports.' Hill soon

after became Master of Trinity, Cambridge, and his testimony carried weight. But most noteworthy, perhaps, was the visit of the King and his train in 1642, of which a detailed account survives in the Library of Lambeth Palace, the work of John Ferrar. The King's party were on their way to York from London, the capital having been practically abandoned to the rebel faction, although war was not formally declared for another five months. They had slept the night at Huntingdon, and riding along the North Road to Stamford on the following afternoon, turned aside — probably on the suggestion of the Duke of Lenox, the good friend of the Ferrars and all Churchmen in those troublous times—to visit the Little Gidding community. With him came the Prince of Wales, Prince Rupert, and a number of the nobility, and he made a stay of some hours. The family met him at the bridge at the bottom of the hill, which spanned the brook that bounded their domain, and kneeling down they prayed God to bless and preserve his Majesty, and keep him safe from all his enemies' malice. The King gave them his hand to kiss, and the party proceeded up the hill at a foot pace. First the King visited the church, and after admiring it asked where the images were about which so much had been said. He was told that there was nothing but what he saw. 'What will not malice invent?' said the King. Questioned about the cross in a stained-glass window the Ferrars replied that the only thing of the sort was on the crown that appeared on the Royal Arms in the small west window.

'Envy was quick-sighted,' observed the Duke of Lenox. 'Nay,' said the Palsgrave, 'can see what is not.' Thence they adjourned to the house, where the King was soon deep in the Harmonies, and especially in the great book which was being prepared for the Prince. 'Charles,' said the King, 'here is a book that contains excellent things. This will make you both wise and good.' With the Palsgrave, himself to become famous as the inventor of mezzotint engraving, he examined and discussed the prints and the book at large, and finally observed that 'it was only a jewel for a prince.' Next they examined the alms-houses, maintained after the Dutch fashion in spotless cleanliness, 'which resembled much the Chapel, being all wainscoated, pillar'd and arched'; and as the King left he gave the widows five pieces in gold, which he had won the night before at cards, bidding them pray for him. 'Gidding is a happy place,' he said; 'I am glad I have seen it.' The young lords regaled themselves on apple pies and cheese cakes in the buttery, and persuaded the King to join them in refreshing themselves. Then as it drew towards sundown their horses were brought and the King and his train departed, amid the prayers of the community for his long and happy reign. 'He lifting his hand to his hat, replied, "Pray, pray for my speedy and safe return," and so rode away, 'not knowing that he should return there again once more, in the very dead of night, a fugitive, and almost alone.'

One would like to know exactly how the Gidding folk fared during the next year or two. Trouble

was going on all round them, and they could hardly have escaped active annoyance. Little John Mapletoft was sent to Westminster to study under their friend Dr. Busby, which suggests that the schools at Gidding were closed. In 1643 there was perpetrated the terrible desecration of Peterborough Cathedral, protracted under the command of a son of Cromwell's over a fortnight, during which no indignity was omitted that ingenuity could suggest or sacrilege that the coarsest irreverence could devise. In December the same sort of thing was repeated on as large a scale at Cambridge. When the spoilers had committed whatever material mischief lay ready to hand, the Puritan authorities called upon all the heads of colleges and Fellows to sign the covenant, and the two hundred loyal men who refused to do so were summarily ejected. Among these were Crashaw, the poet, and Ferrar Collett, a member of the Gidding circle and younger brother of the more famous Mary, himself in after years rector of Little Gidding. From letters written by John Ferrar to Isaac Basire about 1645 it would seem that work at Gidding went on much as before, though some of the aspersions cast upon the community in the *Arminian Nunnery* pamphlet had evidently stuck, for John Ferrar begs his friend to exhibit some of the work done at Gidding to those in high places.

‘It may be there may be more occasion to show them, upon this libel, which makes as if there were no work done at Gidding, but all the

time spent in contemplation, as it would make the world believe: that they may see this hath cost time and much labour every way; and it may do us right in that thing.'

But things were going badly for the King, and help or patronage for such labours as those of the Ferrars could no longer be looked for. It is likely enough that this kind of work was dropped at this time, and perhaps the loose sheets of the incomplete volume of the Five Books of Moses, now to be seen in the library of Magdalen College, Cambridge, represent the last efforts of the community in this direction. The only portion of the work completed is, oddly enough, the title page, which is dated 1641, but the troubles of the time may easily have been responsible for the completion of the remainder being first postponed and then abandoned.

On April 27, 1646, the King fled from Oxford with a view to surrendering himself to the Scottish army, having with him only two trusted followers, Dr. Hudson and Mr. Ashburnham. At midnight on May 2 he climbed the long slope on the Gidding estate which is still known as the King's Close, and revealed himself to John Ferrar, who received him with all possible respect. But Gidding was no safe lodging for the King, and John Ferrar thought it best to conduct him in the darkness to a private house at Coppingford, whence he made his way on the day following to Stamford. What followed is a matter of history. A more tragic fate, if possible, awaited Dr. Hudson. Taking part in a

last desperate resistance offered by the Lincolnshire Royalists at Woodcroft House, near Peterborough, he yielded at length on a promise of quarter. His captors, however, had as little respect for their plighted word as the generality of Puritans, and Hudson was forthwith thrown over the battlements. He caught hold of a spout as he fell, only to have his hands cut off and to be precipitated into the moat, whence, maimed and helpless, he struggled to reach the shore, but was brained by one of the soldiery as he was about to land. This was no isolated instance of the barbarity which marked the ascendancy of the 'saints,' and gave England a lasting lesson in the tender mercies of Puritanism.

In all probability suspicion of succouring the King soon attached itself to the Ferrars, for it is certain that not many weeks afterwards the ruffians of the dominant faction were let loose upon the unoffending household. Of what actually happened we have but meagre details. John Ferrar's note as recorded by Peckard is brief :

'Certain soldiers of the Parliament resolved to plunder the house at Gidding. The family being informed of their hasty approach, thought it prudent to fly, and as to their persons, endeavour to escape the intended violence. These military zealots, in the rage of what they called reformation, ransacked both the church and the house. In doing which they expressed a particular spite against the organ. This they broke in pieces, of which they made a large fire, and

thereat roasted several of Mr. Ferrar's sheep, which they had killed in his grounds. This done they seized all the plate, furniture, and provision which they could conveniently carry away. And in this general devastation perished those works of Mr. Nicholas Ferrar, which merited a better fate.'

Hacket writes in more general terms:

'Religion and loyalty were such eyesores, that all the Ferrars fled away, and dispersed, and took joyfully the despoiling of their goods. All that they had restored to the church, all that they had bestowed upon sacred comeliness, all that they had gathered for their own livelihood, and for alms, was seized upon as a lawful prey, taken from the superstitious persons.'

Where the family took refuge, or exactly when they returned, is not known. Mr. Shorthouse in his *John Inglesant* conveys them to France, and makes Mary Collett die of hardship and privation in a Paris convent, but this, of course, is fiction. In all probability they ventured back early in the following summer, when it seemed for a while as if the King and Parliament were about to come to terms and that the land was to be at peace again. In a letter dated July 27, 1647, Dr. Busby informs his friend Isaac Basire of their return:

'All things at this time are in so dubious a

calme, that the fear is greatest when the danger is lesse. . . . Mr. Thurscrosse is again settled in Yorkshire, Mr. Ferrar with his family at Gidden, long since Mr. Mapletoft hath a good living. All remember you, the Joseph in affliction.'

With this chance reference the veil practically falls over the Gidding community and its work. The damage that was done could only have been partially repaired. In their fury at the organ the Puritan spoilers probably destroyed the west front of the church so as to get at the west gallery in which it stood, and the reconstructed west front, which is what we now know, is further east and different in character from the simple gable end of the earlier time, having a square-headed doorway and no circular window such as that which had formerly contained the royal arms. The desire to efface the 'superstitious' dials probably accounted for the destruction of the tower, all trace of which has now vanished, and many of the fittings of the church were only recovered by the diligent search in the cottages of the country-side made by Mr. Hopkinson in 1853. The most singular recovery made by him was that of the great brass eagle-lectern, which was found in dragging the pond adjoining the church, where it must have lain since the dark day of sacrilege in 1646. The silver beak and claws are missing, wrenched off no doubt by the 'saints'; the font, too, has suffered mutilation, and the 'fair island seat' under the tower is no longer in evidence; but otherwise the church, with its renovated Jacobean

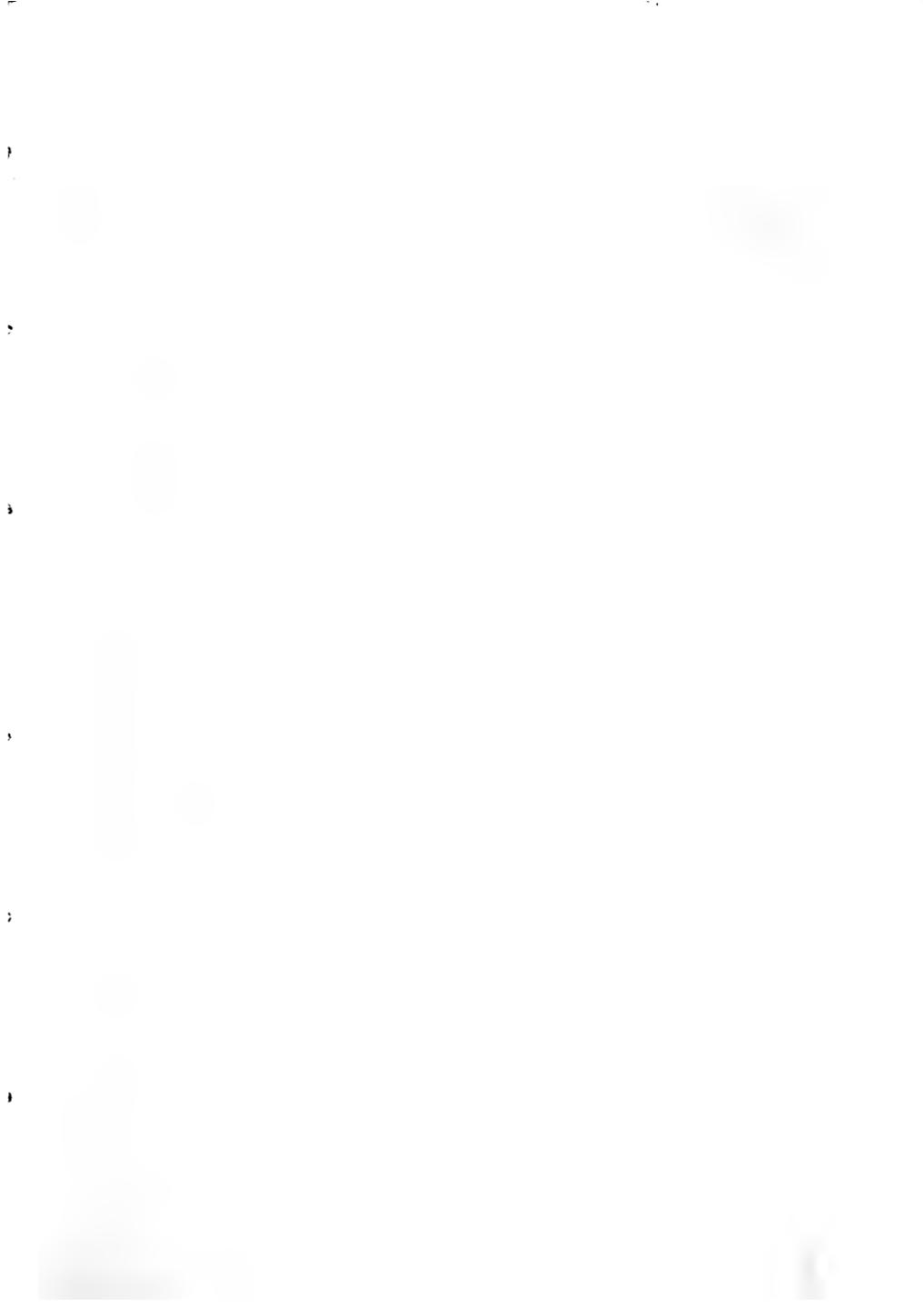
stalls, is now restored to very much what it must have been in the Ferrars' day. The altar of cedar-wood, the brass table containing the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments are still there; and over the west door is still to be seen the dark stone slab which figured on the original front that Nicholas Ferrar knew, inscribed with the text of his choice: 'THIS IS NONE OTHER BUT THE HOUSE OF GOD AND THE GATE OF HEAVEN.'

## CHAPTER XI

## THE LAST OF LITTLE GIDDING

‘They passed not with the passing day,  
The great ones that are gone :  
Their bodies fell beside the way,  
Their spirit leads us on.’

IT remains only to gather up the last scattered references to the survivors and representatives of the community founded by Nicholas Ferrar. Of the numerous girls who were educated and grew up in the shadow of that quiet home three only, Mary and Anna Collett and Virginia Ferrar, seem to have remained single; the rest—and there was a large number of them—duly married, and several were wedded to clergy, as it was intended that they should do. Brasses in the church and other records tell us of one gap after another made by death in the original circle. Mr. Collett passed away in 1650, but it was not until seven years later that the community was practically broken up by the deaths of John Ferrar, Mrs. Collett, and her daughter, Susanna Chedley. Meanwhile there is evidence of wholesome activities still carried on, and a book said to have been bound by Mary Collett as late as 1669 has lately come to light.



1631.

Yours faithfully  
Sisters  
Mary & Anne Collet.

Who both dyed Virgins, resolving so to live  
when they were young, by the grace of God.  
My much Honoured Aunt Mary who took of  
me & my brother Peter & Sister Mary after  
the death of our Reverend & pious Father  
Josiah Mapletoft dyed in ye 80<sup>th</sup> year of  
her age John Mapletoft Jan. 22. 1715

THE ENDORSEMENT BY DR. JOHN MAPLETOFT IN A CONVERSATION BOOK  
(NICHOLAS FERRAR'S WRITING ABOVE)

Of Mary and Anna Collett we know little save that they kept their vows of virginity to the last. Our authority for this is Mary's favourite godson, John Mapletoft, who lived, as we shall see, to become a man of mark. He records of them in one of the Conversation Books:

'Who both dyed Virgins, resolving so to live when they were young, by the Grace of God. My much-honoured Aunt Mary, who took care of me and my brother Peter and Sister Mary after the death of our reverend and pious Father, Mr. Joshua Mapletoft, dyed in the 80th year of her age.'

According to Mayor, Mary Collett was buried on November 9, 1680, but where he does not tell us. Of Anna we know nothing. But as neither of them seem to have died at Gidding, it may be assumed that they left the place—perhaps when the manor house was abandoned and the family migrated to Old Park, apparently another house on the Gidding estate. Members of the family continued to be buried at Gidding until the middle of the eighteenth century, when the estate must have passed out of the hands of the Ferrars, who were by that time definitely established in Huntingdon.

Of Virginia Ferrar we have some vivid glimpses, in consequence of the connection which she and her father maintained with the colony from which she took her name. Born on Christmas Eve the year after the family settled at Gidding (1627), we

are told in John Ferrar's life of Nicholas how, when still smarting under the downfall of their schemes for Virginia, he named his daughter by its name, 'so that speaking to her, looking upon her, or hearing others call her by her name, he might think upon both at once.' 'Both grandmother and uncle,' he adds, 'liked her much the better for her name.' She grew up a clever and handy girl, and herself produced one of the extant Harmonies of the Four Gospels (that now in possession of Lord Bristol), which has an indorsement on the title-page stating that it was 'Done at Little Gidding, A.D. 1640, by Virginia Ferrar, age 12.' She did not form part of the famous 'Little Academy,' probably on account of her youth, though this was no bar to the inclusion of little Anne Mapletoft as the 'Humble,' when she had reached the mature age of three years. She was, however, formally handed over to the custody of the 'Chief,' with her two brothers, by her father, the 'Guardian.' It is likely that the associations of her name and family tended to concentrate her interests upon Virginia from a very early age, and it is certain that when she came to years of discretion this interest strengthened and matured into something which can be described as expert knowledge of the colony and its conditions. The late Mr. Michael Lloyd Ferrar, writing on the authority of a number of family papers in his possession, speaks of her as her father's right hand in all matters connected with Virginia. He continues:

'She was as well known to the people of

Virginia as if she lived there; she conducted her father's correspondence with the settlers, and after his death kept on the good work till her own death thirty years later. . . . Had the *Life of Nicholas* been supplemented by a *Life of John* by his son John, we should find the daughter Virginia occupying a very high place in the record, quite as high in her own sphere as was her cousin Mary Collett in her sphere.'

In July 1651 there was published by one Edward Husband *A Mapp of Virginia discovered to ye Falls* indorsed at the bottom 'John Farrer Esq. collegit.' This map was very shortly afterwards, to all appearance, reissued with the word *Falls* altered to *Hills*, and 'Domina Virginia Farrer' substituted for 'John Farrer Esq.', evidently a tribute upon John Ferrar's part to the share of his daughter in its compilation. Possibly it was drawn to illustrate her books on Health and Wealth to which reference is made below.

It is clear, however, that her especial attention was devoted to finding some solution of the problem of breeding silk-worms in the conditions of Virginia. To develop an industry upon these lines had been one of the aims of the adventurers from the first. Skilled foreigners had been imported at intervals, evidently without success, although by their own admission the climatic and other conditions seemed entirely favourable. The colonists had an excellent incentive, too, in King James's dislike to tobacco, which so long continued to be the staple product of the colony, even to the

extent of furnishing its currency, and Virginia Ferrar shared this antipathy and expressed it with delightful vigour—‘that contemptible, beggarly, Indian weed’ she called it. In tracts and letters which still irradiate the musty pages of Force and other worthy writers on American history, she tells of her experiences and experiments—‘she having been many a year a mistris of silkworms, and kept them by bookrules.’ There is no resisting her enthusiasm, which appears even in the title of the tract:

‘THE REFORMED VIRGINIAN SILKWORM or a rare and New Discovery of A speedy way, and easie means found out by a young lady in England, she having made full proof thereof in May Anno 1652 For the feeding of silkworms in the Woods, on The Mulberry-Tree-leaves in *Virginia*: who after fourty dayes time, present their most rich golden-coloured silken Fleece, to the instant wonderful enriching of all the Planters there, requiring from them neither cost, labour or hindrance in any of their other employments whatsoever.’

Within the tract she writes with equal spirit:

‘The same Lady who last year sent you her Books on *Health and Wealth* (who hath the happiness to bear the name of your incomparable Country) continuing her sincere affections to the advancing of your welfares in all kindes; and amongst the best in this rich work of

Silk. . . . She hath I say this Spring found out, (by the speciall blessing of God upon her intentions) so rare, so speedy and so costless a way and means for the feeding of Silkworms; by the trial and experiment she so luckily made, to the admiration of all that have seen or heard of it, as a thing scarce credible; because not heretofore thought of, nay as it were held impossible by such Authours as have written of the ordering and feeding of Silkwormes: that this her invention being thus made known unto you, her beloved friends in *Virginia*, she is most confident, and assures herself you will all there instantly, without further delay (which will be the joy of her heart) become great and rich masters of this noble Silkwork to all your unspeakable wealth.'

On the margin she indorses with equal enthusiasm:

'The Lady hath of these Silk bottoms in her Cabinet as Jewels to convince the incredulous, as they are ten times bigger than any in Europe to admiration, and of infinite encouragement to the work.'

'Do but as she hath done,' she adds—

'follow but with good courage your cheerfull leader, and doubtless you shall finde (what she desires you may,) namely *great profit and pleasure* in an honest employment. This Silken-Mine will be to you of more benefit than a Mine of Silver.'

Coming to details, she tells how she accomplished her aim in the beginning of May 1652, 'when her young Mulberry tree in her garden began to put out its buds, then her Silk-worm-eggs began to hatch, as the nature of this wise creature is, when her food begins once to appear.' Then, as 'book-rules' had already made themselves suspect of futility, she proceeded to violate them boldly by exposing the young silkworms to the weather, when they grew 'greater and greater to the singular delight and content of their mistris.' 'A gallant silken white-winged fly,' is the marginal note to the passage which follows:

'About 45 dayes thus feeding upon the leaves, they began that rare and glorious work of spinning their Silk-bottomes upon the leaves and branches of the tree: such a gallant sight to behold, it ravished the Spectators, and their Mistris' joy was crowned with excess of happiness herein and hereby, apparently finding the incomparable felicity this would prove to her dearly beloved *Virginia* (for so you must give her leave to call it).'

Practical considerations are not neglected: against rain or heat 'how easie is a canvas covering reared over the trees to save them from either'; as to birds, 'it's easily prevented by severall wayes and meanes,' boys, nets, and such-like, which she details. Fortified by her own experience, she bids them disregard the pedants — 'books are too superstitious and ceremonious in the rules which

are many that they give concerning the ordering of the worm, which are not so necessary as they pretend. . . . I assure you that you will abundantly satisfy this, though noble, yet most humble creature, even with any habitation to do her work in.' Tending silkworms she thought 'a most proper employment for the lasie Indians.' She gives and asks advice upon this and other matters with equal freedom: 'The way to speedy wealth,' she advised the colonists, 'was by some hundreds of you to remove some sixty miles south by land to attempt the discovery of the Westerly Sea, on the border of Virginia, and both two very easily achieved.' She suggests the fostering of 'cony-warrens,' and descants upon the manifold usefulness of the conies—they were good for food, their skins were worth 8d. each, their wool was good to spin and was also 'vendible for this new invention of fine light hats now sold at 15 and 20 *shil.*,' and for making stockings 'as fine as those of silk'—and she winds up gaily with a hearty *Floreat Virginia.*

Her suggestions bore fruit in a voluminous correspondence with her friends and relations in Virginia, in which John Ferrar, too, took his part. 'Noble Squire Diggs,' a well-to-do Virginian planter, had 'at his own very great charge sent for two Armenians out of Turkey,' who succeeded in making ten pounds of silk, and raised visions of a time when 'Virginia should rival Peru for wealth'; and some recalcitrancy on the part of the reformed silkworm was encountered in 1654 by 'A way experimented by Mr. Farrar' to make

him unwind himself more efficiently. Ultimately a flourishing industry was established, for which the Virginians expressed their gratitude to Virginia Ferrar in no stinted terms, and sang her praises lustily in prose and verse. One copy of verses, quoted by Mr. Michael Lloyd Ferrar, is headed 'To the honor'd Lady Mrs Virginia Ferrar on her new Discovery of the Silk Trade in these parts of the World,' and concludes:

'Merchants, mechanick-Traders, poor, rich, all  
Shall thee the Foundress of their Fortunes call.  
The Muses Darlings with their silver Tongues  
Your Fame resound in their delightful songs.  
Let thy deare parent, pious patriot, sage,  
Share in thine honor, glory of his Age.  
His education and thy virtuous Mind  
God's Favour in this Worke were all conjoyned.'

Her father ingeniously paraphrased a passage from one of her pamphlets, entitling it *Homo Vermis*:

'Wee all are creeping Worms of th' earth,  
Some are Silk-Worms great by birth,  
Glow-Worms some that shine by night,  
Slow-Worms others, apt to bite,  
Some are Muck-Worms slaves to wealth,  
Maw-Worms some that wrong the health,  
Some to the publique no good willers,  
Canker-Worms and Cater-pillers;  
Fond about the earth wee'r crawling,  
For a sorry life wee'r sprawling,  
Putrid stuff we suck, it fills us,  
Death then sets his foot and kills us.'

Of the Gidding circle there is little more to be said. There are scattered notices of Virginia

Ferrar in the family letters which survive among the Ferrar papers at Magdalene College, Cambridge, but nothing that adds much to our knowledge of her. One of her relatives speaks of her 'noble and free spirit.' Mr. Michael Lloyd Ferrar writes of her:

'After her father's death in 1657, she lived with his successor, her brother John, at Old Park, another house on the estate, and was buried at Gidding, in 1688, at the age of 62. Meanwhile she had, leaving to Mary Collett, who had changed her name to Mary Ferrar as being the adopted daughter of Nicholas, the management of the House and its Community, devoted herself to the development of Virginia.'

The date of her burial at Little Gidding is recorded as January 17, 1687-8.

John Ferrar devoted his closing years to the preparation of his brother's memoirs, beginning in 1655. These seem to have been circulated among friends, who noted and excerpted from them freely, but the originals have completely vanished, and are probably best represented by the Baker manuscripts in the Cambridge University Library, which consist of extensive extracts made, as it would seem, at first hand from Ferrar's work. Other versions are those by Bishop Turner (extant in the two versions by Macdonogh and Jebb, the latter and Baker's MSS. have been admirably edited by Professor Mayor) and that by Dean Peckard, which is perhaps the best known. None of these

are complete, and some have been deformed to suit the tone of eighteenth-century Churchmanship; but by taking Peckard as a base, and supplementing and correcting him from the other versions, it is possible to get a fairly vivid impression of the personality of its subject, especially, too, when we call in to our aid the sympathetic sketches by Hacket, Barnabas Oley, and Izaak Walton. On September 28, 1657, John Ferrar died, and was buried, as had been arranged by his brother twenty years before, between the altartomb of Nicholas and the west door of the little church where they had worshipped in company. A stone slab marks his grave, and a brass which is now affixed to the wall inside the church, after giving his name and the date of his death, concludes appropriately with the text that used to figure on the door of the old house at Gidding:

FLEE · FROM · EVIL · AND · DO · Y<sup>E</sup> · THING · YT · IS  
RIGHT · AND · DWELL · FOR · EVERMORE

Eleven days later, on October 9, he was followed to the grave by his sister Susanna, the mother of the Colletts, whose husband, John Collett, had died in March 1650, seven years previously. With them vanished the generation which had founded the community at Little Gidding.

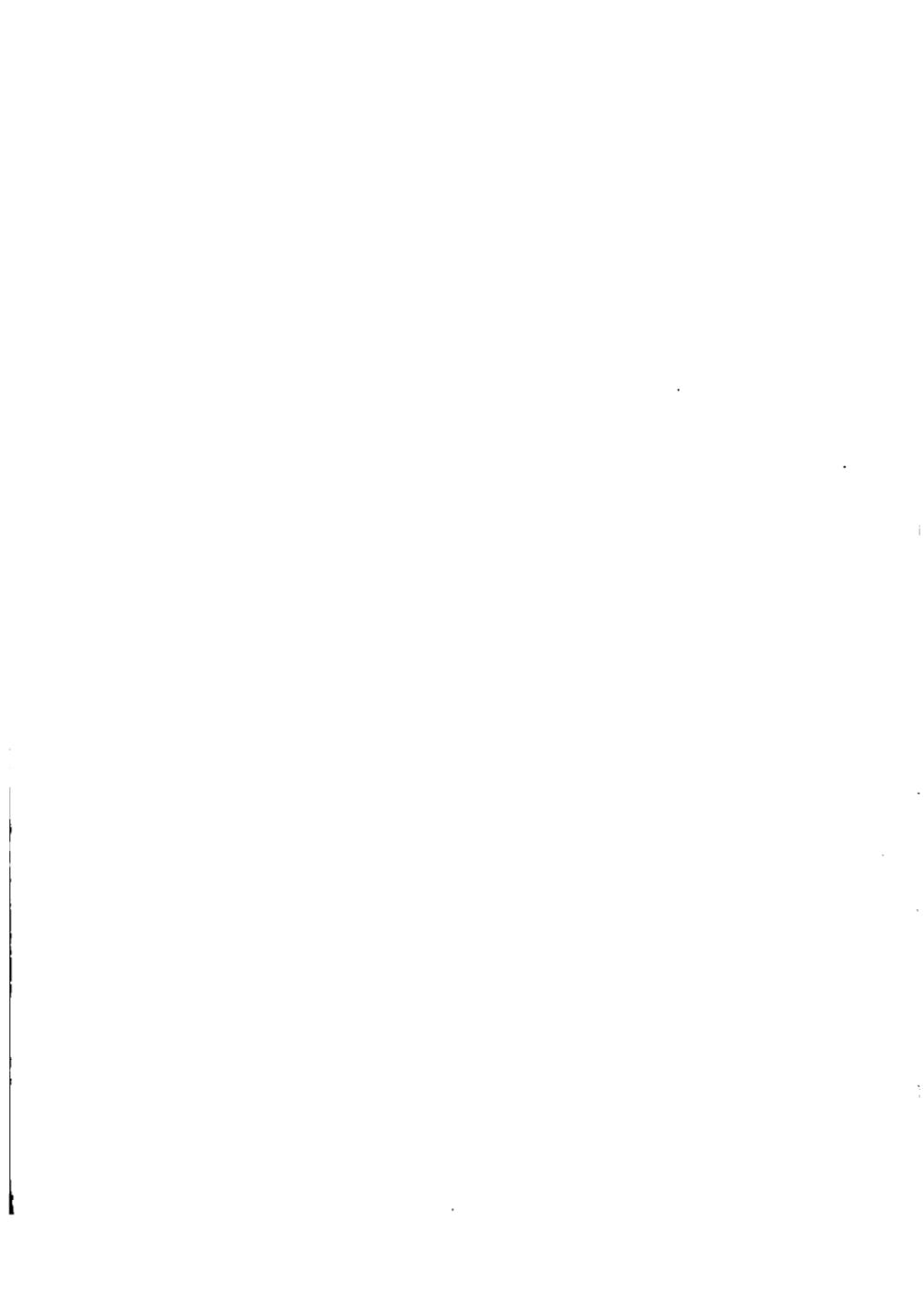
For the last depositary of the Little Gidding tradition we must look to John Mapletoft, whose career in many respects resembled that of his great-uncle and godfather, Nicholas Ferrar. Born in 1631, he was brought up for some years at Little Gidding, and of that famous community he was



*Photo by*

*Percy J. Slater, Sawtry*

**GRAVES OF NICHOLAS AND JOHN FERRAR AT LITTLE GIDDING**



probably the latest survivor. During the Civil Wars he was being educated at Westminster under that staunch friend of the Ferrars, Dr. Busby, and subsequently took his degree at Trinity College, Cambridge. He had been intended for Holy Orders, and to enter them was his own keen desire, but the unsettlement of the times made the fulfilment of this intention impossible, and he turned instead to the study of medicine, and attained the reputation of an accomplished and successful physician. He travelled widely in Italy and elsewhere, and became skilled, like Nicholas Ferrar, in ancient and modern languages. From March 1676 to October 1679, he held the distinguished post of Physic Professor at Gresham College. But his desire to enter Holy Orders was undiminished, and as soon as he could, without incurring the imputation of doing so for profit, he determined to forsake medicine for the ministry. The years from 1660 to 1730 have been called the golden age of the Church of England, and without going so far as to assert the literal truth of this estimate, it must be conceded, in the light of the additions to our knowledge of the Churchmanship of this period made by Dr. Wickham Legg and others, that it was a time of active Church life. Societies for the Reformation of Manners were springing up on all sides (in 1700 there were no less than thirty-nine of them in London alone), and their aims included frequent services and celebrations of the Eucharist at least every Sunday, besides the promotion of Christian education and other charitable works. The revival-

ists were of course charged at once with popery, and Dr. White Kennett complained of their having pictures over the altar—of this he had had, as Dr. Legg observes, some special knowledge, having been represented as Judas in a picture over the altar at St. Mary's, Whitechapel. But Dr. Mapleton's sympathies would be wholly with such a movement as this, and he threw himself into it ardently.

After spending some time in retirement at Hemel Hempstead he received Holy Orders, and in 1682 was appointed to the cure of Braybrooke, in Northamptonshire, where he made his mark immediately as a devoted and successful parish priest, and repaired and refitted the church, and endowed the schools. Three years later he was appointed to the charge of St. Lawrence, Jewry, as the result of a movement upon the part of several of the London clergy: this he held until his resignation by reason of advanced age in 1710, refusing all offers of preferment 'to avoid the suspicion of having left one profession and taken up another to enrich himself and his family.' At St. Lawrence's he maintained the Catholic tradition, as he had learned it at Little Gidding, for twenty-five strenuous years. The friend of Robert Nelson and Bishop Ken, he was an enthusiastic original member of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge while it was still in its first youth, and he was a President and a liberal benefactor of Sion College. As beffited one whose family had been closely concerned with the plantation of Virginia, he was an ardent advocate of

the cause of American missions, and one of the founders of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. On the question of the more thorough and systematic religious instruction of the rank and file of the Church he held strong opinions, which he carried actively into practice by promoting the provision of parochial libraries and by supplying his own parishioners with sound literature, some of it written and compiled by himself. He died in 1721, and was buried in the church where he had ministered so long and to such good purpose. His character has been summed up by Dr. Ward in simple and striking words:

‘He was remarkable from his youth for sincere piety and devotion, which grew up with him into a settled habit, unaffected and free from all sourness or reserve. He was of an open and generous temper, void of all designs himself, or suspecting them in others; obliging in his deportment and very agreeable in conversation. He showed a great neglect, if not contempt of riches, and esteemed it sufficient, if he had enough to pass easily through the world, and something to spare for good and pious uses. His body decayed gently, but his mind not at all; and he was to the last as free from covetousness as ever.’

So to all appearance ended the work of Nicholas Ferrar. By the middle of the eighteenth century the impulse given by himself and his disciples seemed to have faded out from the main stream

of national life, to be kept alive doubtfully by the unnoticed piety of the Nonjurors, until the Oxford Revival awoke the Church to a reassertion of the old principles, which were in danger of being permanently overwhelmed in the flood of evangelical individualism. Now we see them established again and practically unchallenged, supported and acknowledged by all that can lay claim to be efficient and representative in the Church. Nobody could less have foreseen such a result or would have greeted it with more astonishment than the founder of the Little Gidding community, who only did his duty in his day and followed the light as he saw it. But none the less the Church will now and always inscribe high in her roll of those who, by their example, have moulded her polity and practice, and, by their personal holiness, have impelled her in the path of spiritual progress, the name of Nicholas Ferrar.

## APPENDIX

## THE SONG OF 'THE OBEDIENT'

*(Cur Mundus Militat)*

Why doth this world contend  
For glorious vanity?  
Whose wealth so subject is  
To mutability?

As earthly vessels fail  
Through their fragility :  
So standeth worldly force  
Unsure and slippery.

Characters raised in ice  
Think rather permanent  
Then earthly vanities  
Wasting incontinent.

Shaddowd with vertue pure,  
But false in recompense ;  
At no time yielding us  
True trust and Confidence.

To men more Credit give,  
Who want Fidelity,  
Then trust in worldly wealth,  
Whose end is Misery.

Falsehood is fond delight,  
 Pleasure is franticknes,  
 Desired vanities  
 Of fleeting Ficklenes.

Where now is Solomon  
 Sometime in Royalty ;  
 Or Samson with his great  
 Invincibility ;

Or gentle Jonathan  
 So praysd for Friendliness ;  
 Or fairest Absalom  
 So rare in Comelines ?

Where now is Cæsar gone,  
 Highst in Authority,  
 Or Dives with his fare  
 And sumptuosity ?

Tell now where Tully is,  
 Clearest in Eloquence ;  
 Or Aristotle fled  
 With his intelligence.

O silly vermins food,  
 O Mass of Dustiness,  
 O Dew, O Vanity,  
 Whence is thy loftines ?

To-morrow for to live  
 Thou hast no certainty ;  
 Doe good therefore to all  
 Whilst thou hast Liberty.

This worldly Glory great  
How short a Feast it is,  
And like a shaddow here,  
Lo, how it vanishes,

Taking rewards away  
Of long Continuance,  
And leads us in the way  
Of erring Ignorance.

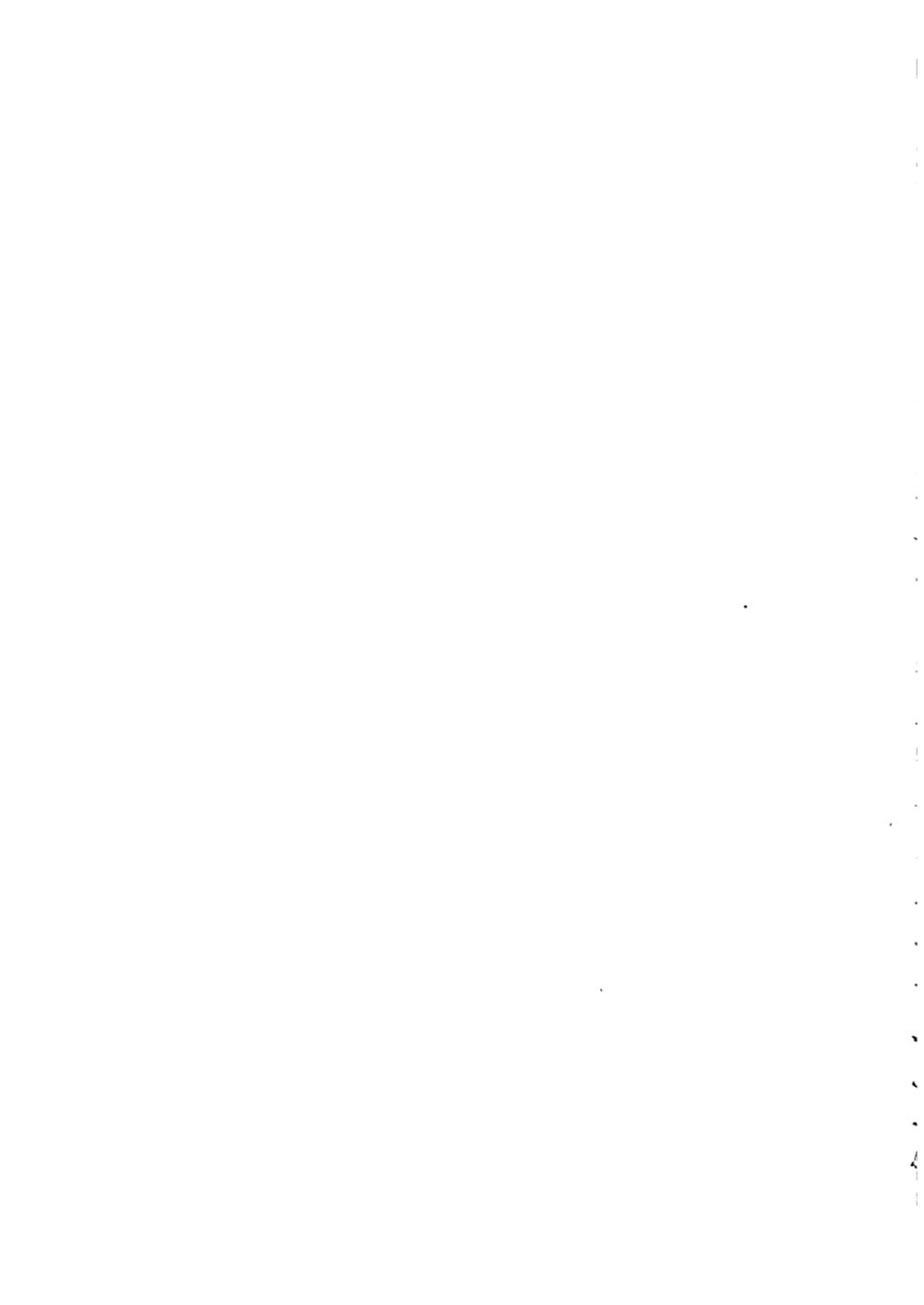
This earthly Glory most  
Which here is magnified,  
In Scripture terméd is  
As Grasse that witheréd.

And as the lightest leafe  
The wind away doth blow,  
So light is life of Man  
For death to overthrow.

Think that which thou mayst lose  
Is not thine certainly.  
This worlde will take againe  
Her guifts of vanity.

Think, then, on heaven above,  
Thereon thy mind addresse,  
Contemne all worldly wealth  
For endlesse Blessednesse.

*[Probably translated by Nicholas Ferrar.]*



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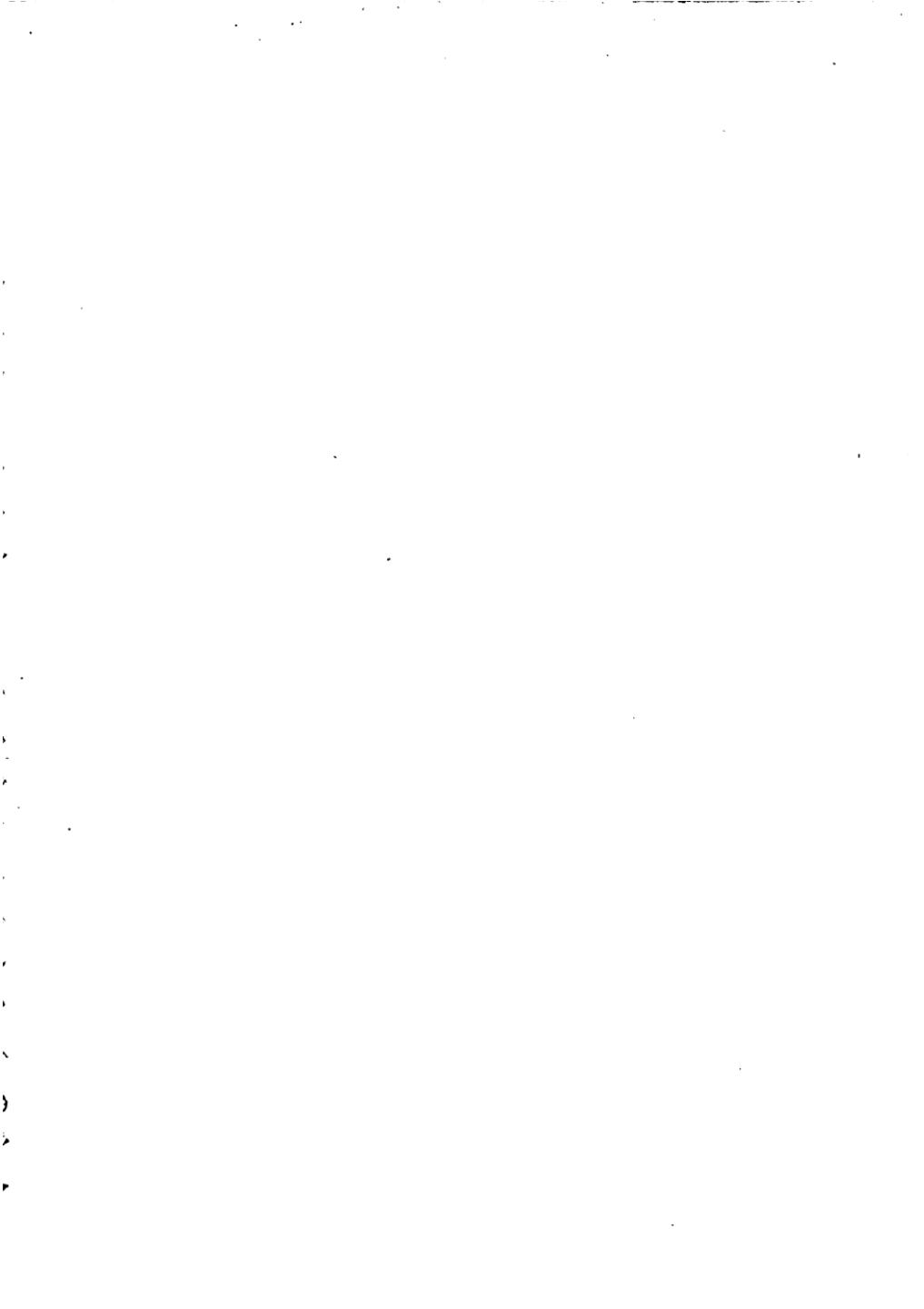
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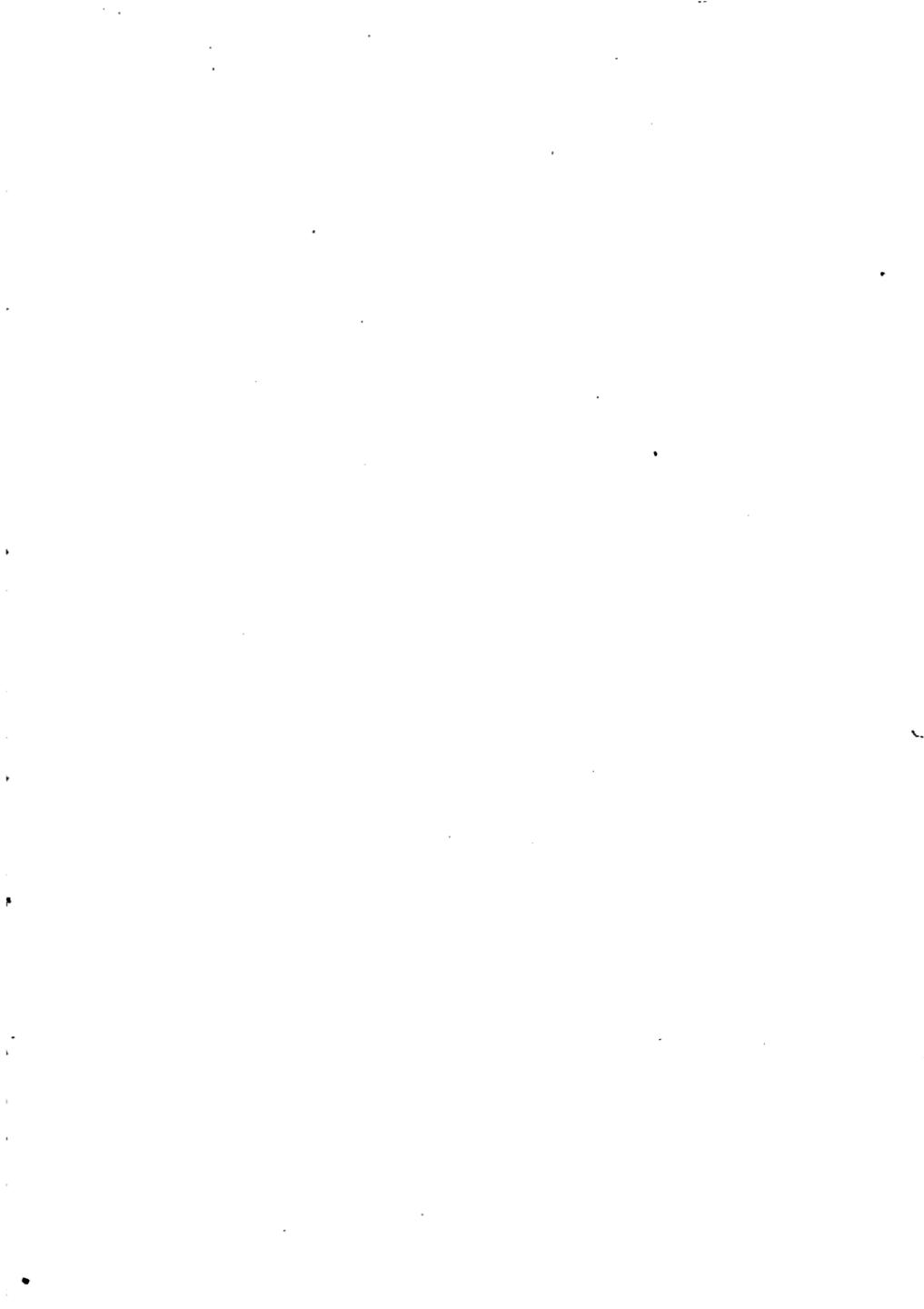
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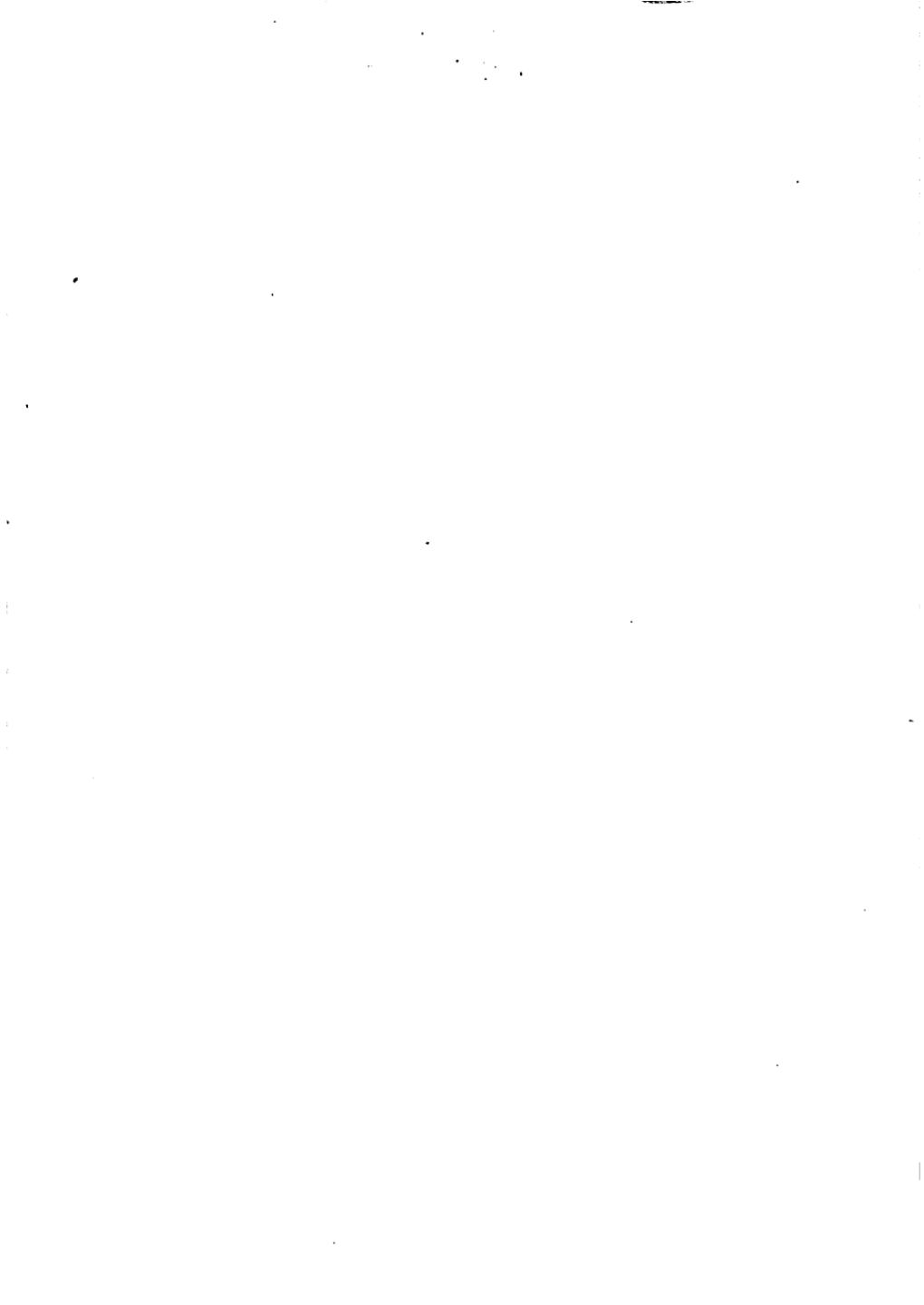
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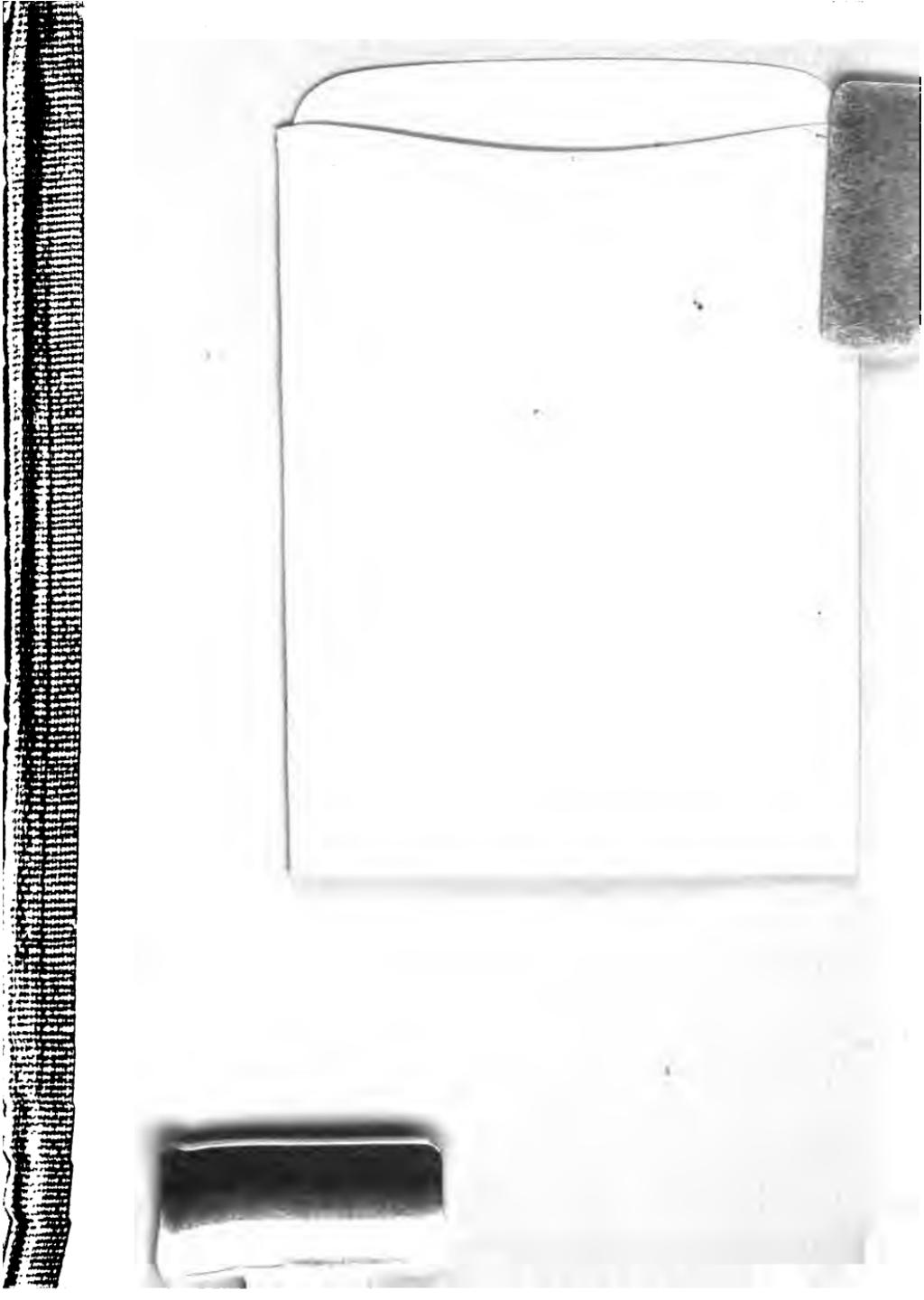




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